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Sight and Sound

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OF TWO
MAJOR
MAGAZINE
AWARDS

Woody Allen
in Manhattan
Bhaji in
Blackpool
Chen Kaige
in Beijing
Peter Wollen's
homage to
Louise Brooks
Terence Davies
on the man
who made
'The Ladykillers'

The Scorsese interview



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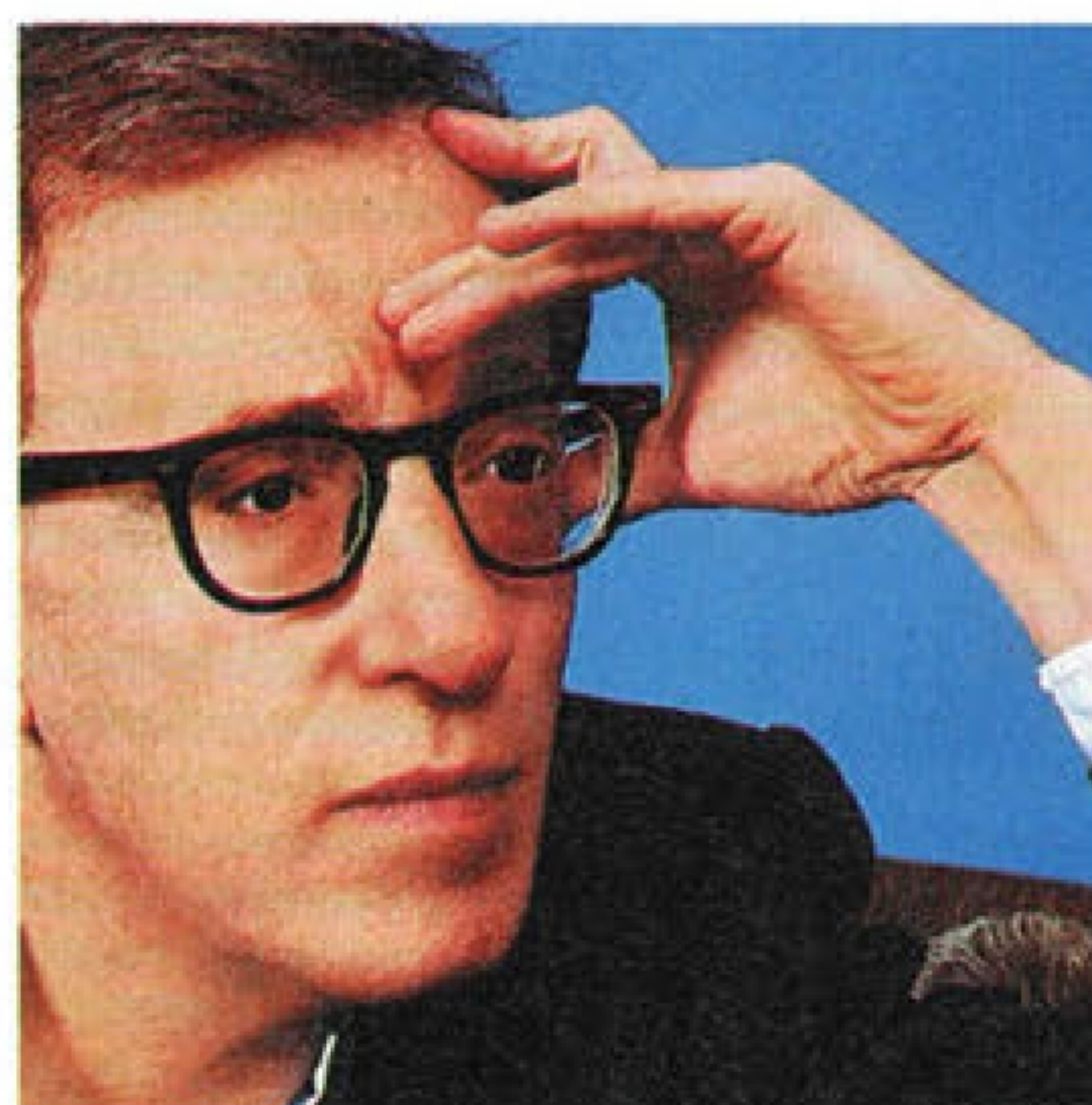
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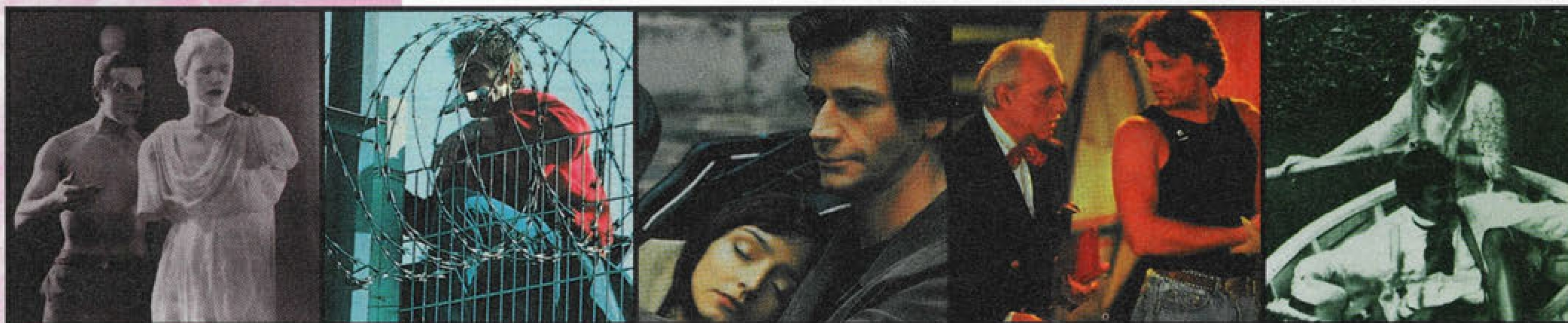
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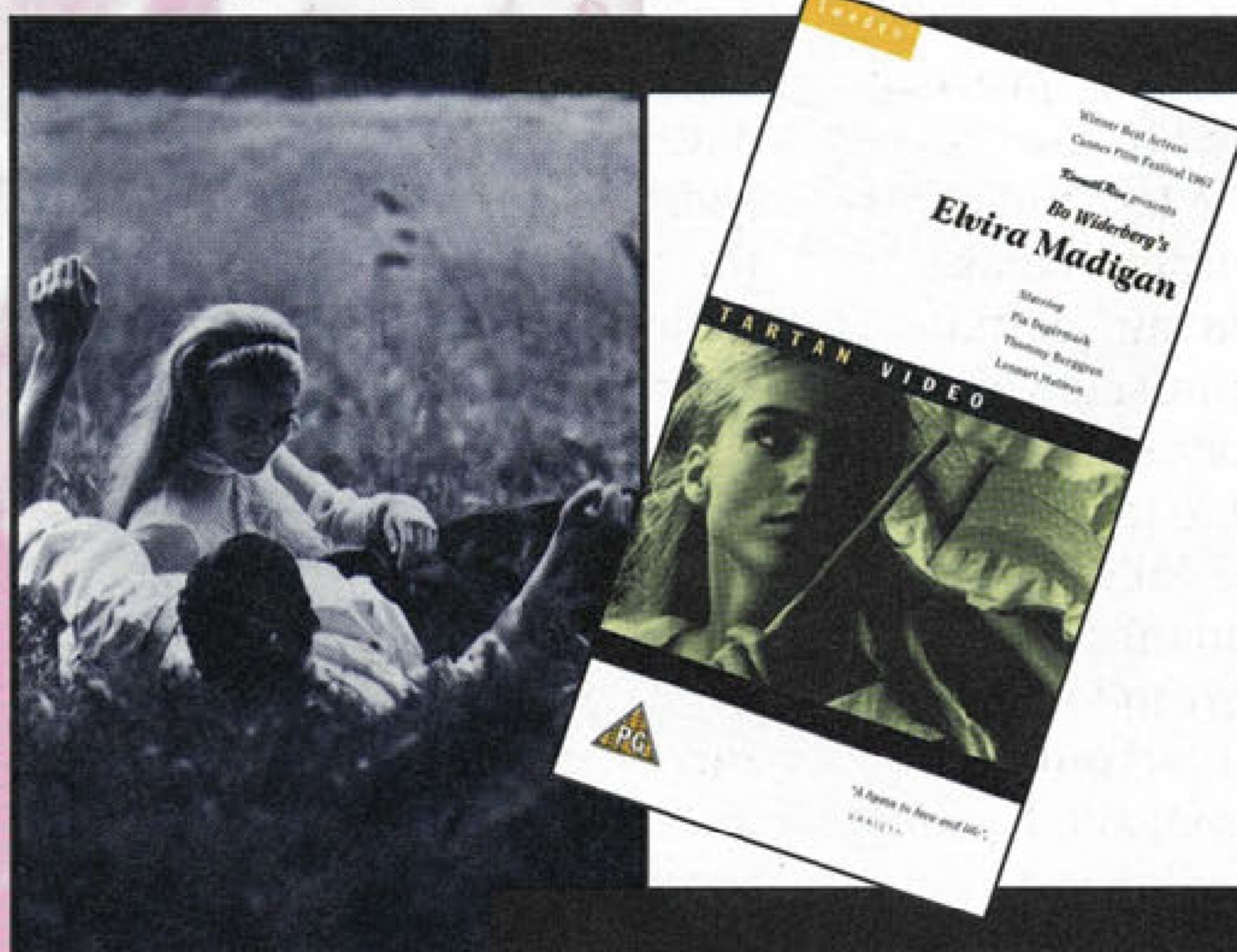
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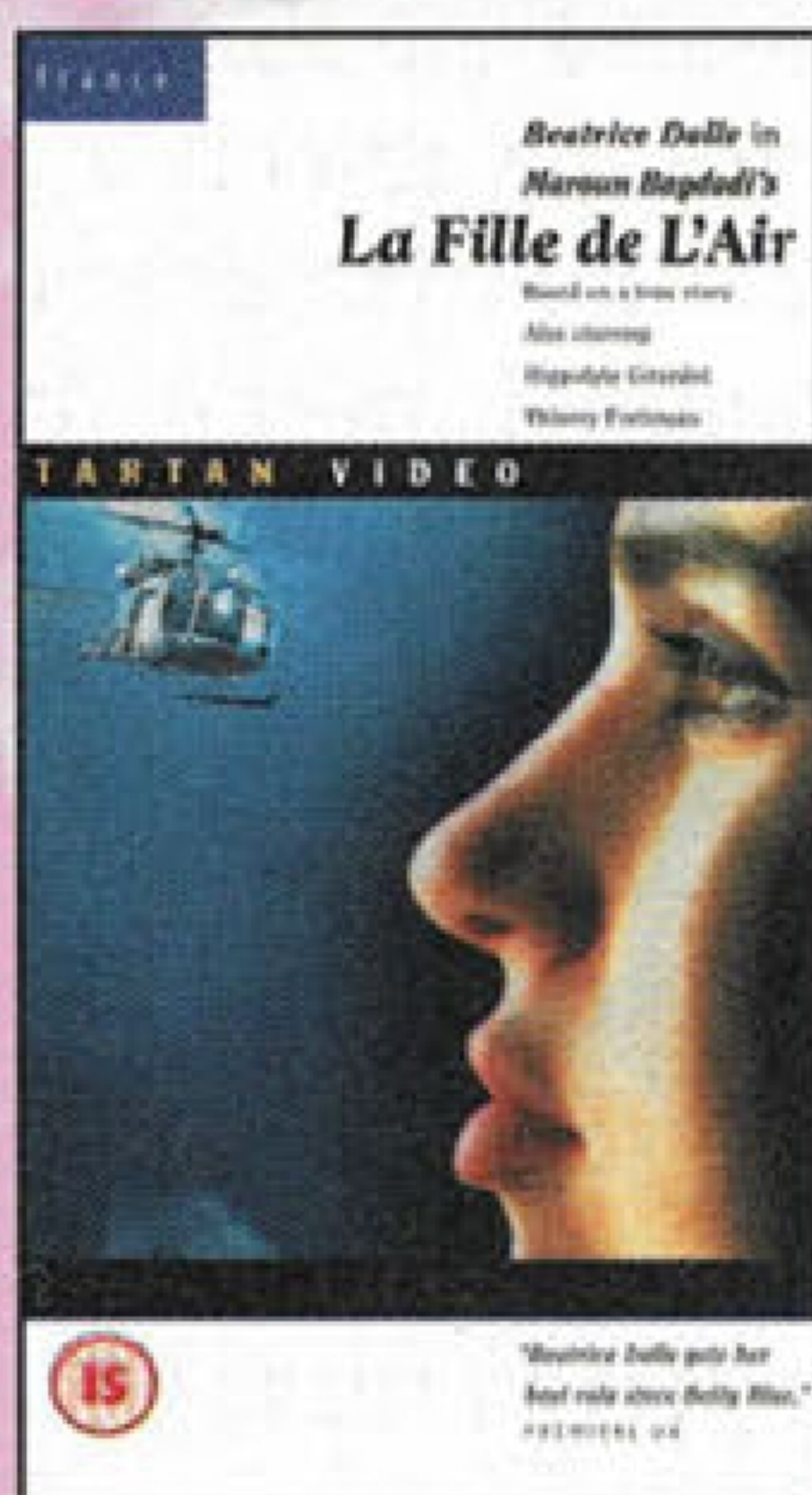
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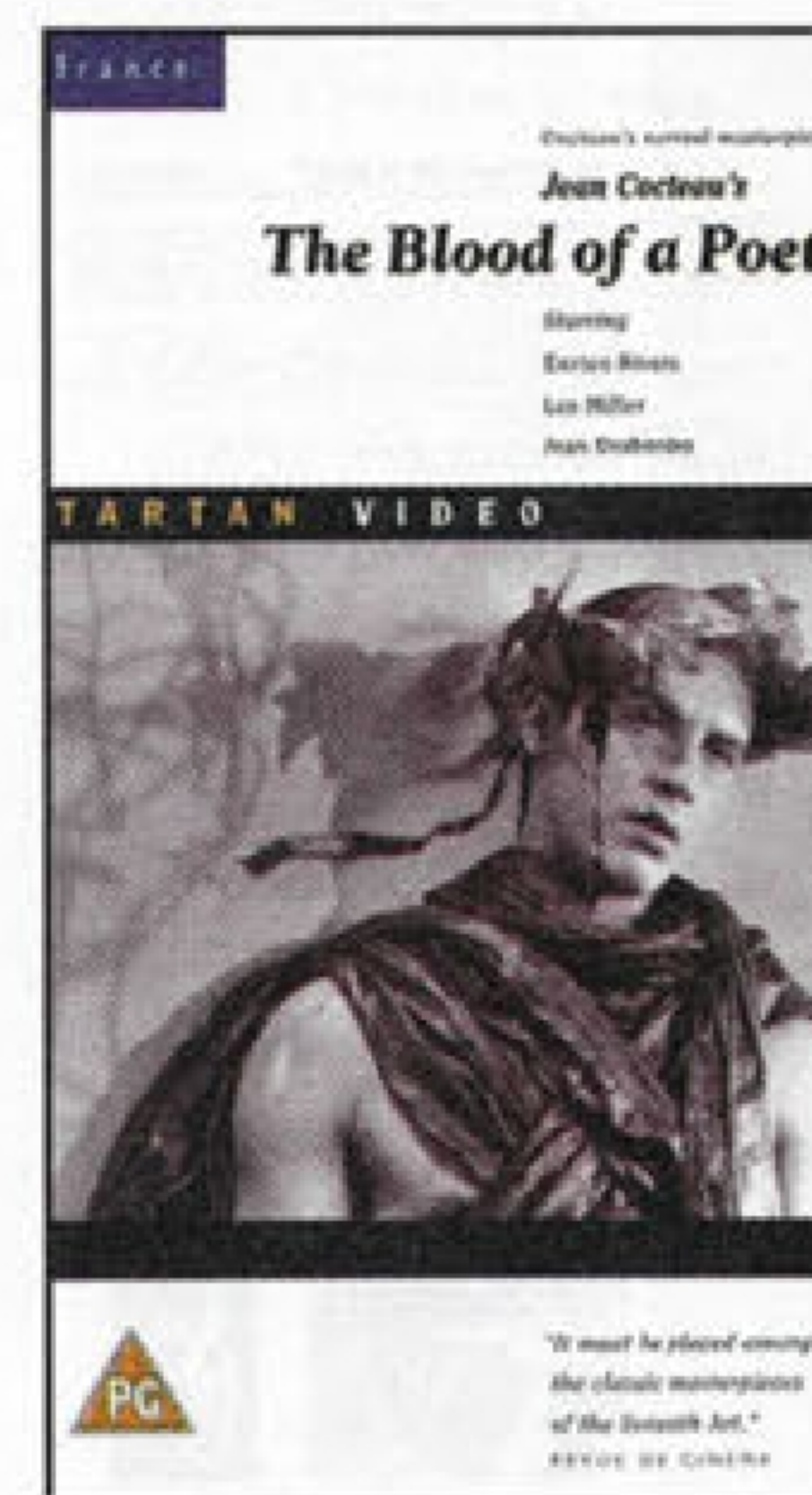
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After costume epics such as Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans*, Sally Potter's *Orlando* and Jane Campion's *The Piano*, Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence* adds its weight to the case that the period or costume picture has once again become a critically important (as well as popular) genre. This proposition would probably have seemed untenable a generation ago to those brought up to believe that direct engagement with contemporary life is the mark of serious cinema, whether *à la nouvelle vague* or Britain's equivalent, the television *Wednesday Play*.

While the reasons for the rise and rise of the period picture are hardly simple, they probably include the impulse near the end of the century to revisit the turn of the last and other crucial historical moments in order to make an inventory of what we are leaving behind; the renewed importance of feminism, which has undoubtedly given fresh status to a genre which has traditionally been able to negotiate questions of sexual power – and indeed has often been denigrated as a 'woman's picture'; the collapse of the modernist orthodoxy, which has created a space where 'popular' but lowly regarded genres can be reassessed; and last but not least, the recognition by studios and television that period pictures can be popular, make money, and have cultural authority. (It is a sign of the times that Cannes awarded its major prize in 1993 to two period pictures, *Farewell My Concubine* and *The Piano*.)

Whatever the reasons for the interest the genre now excites, debates about the period picture ought to be of particular relevance in Britain, since from the early nineteenth century and Walter Scott through the Gainsborough melodramas to *Orlando* and Jarman's anti-costume costume drama *Wittgenstein*, period drama has been an important strain within the culture. Indeed every realist impulse in British cinema seems to have been shadowed by

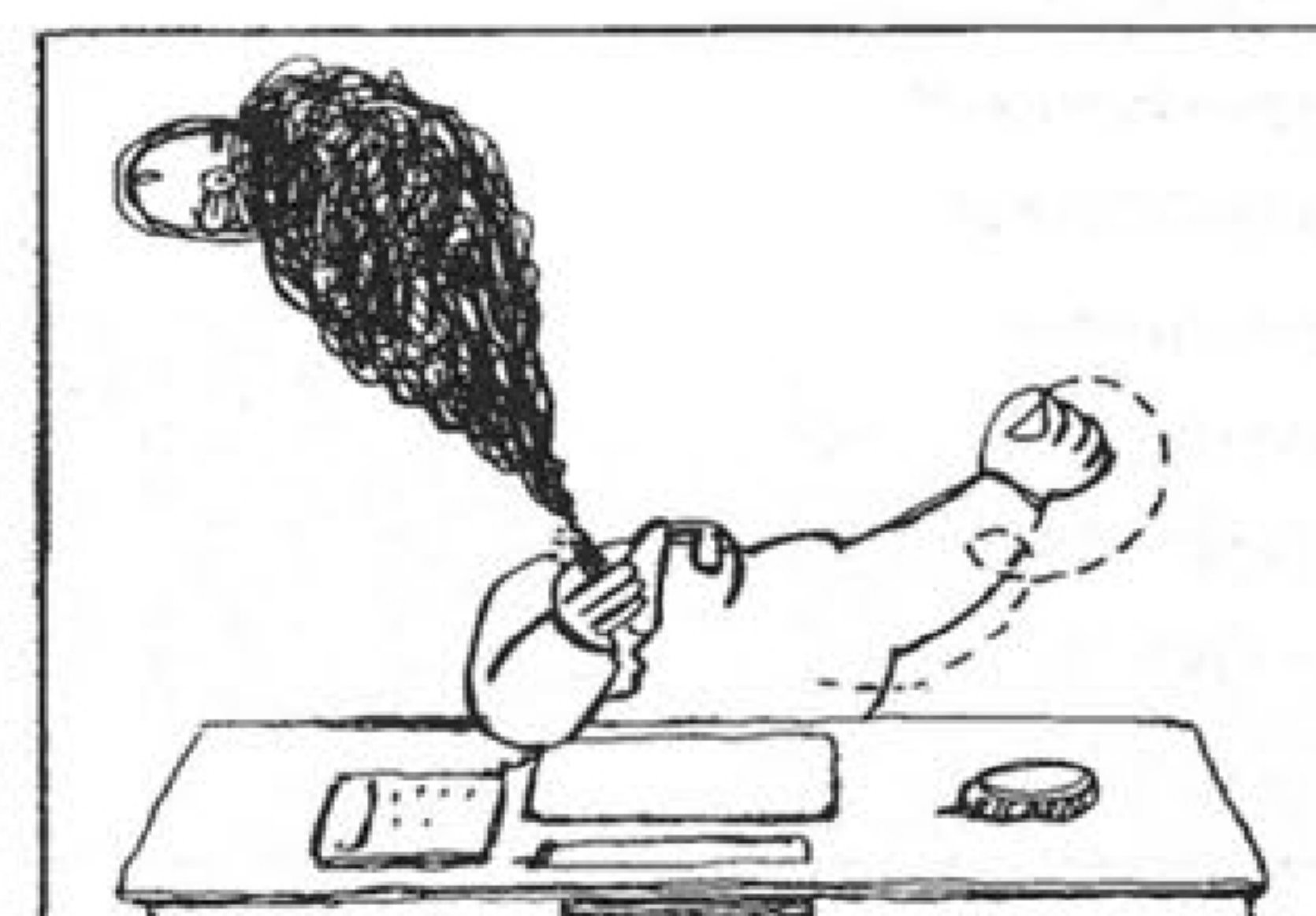
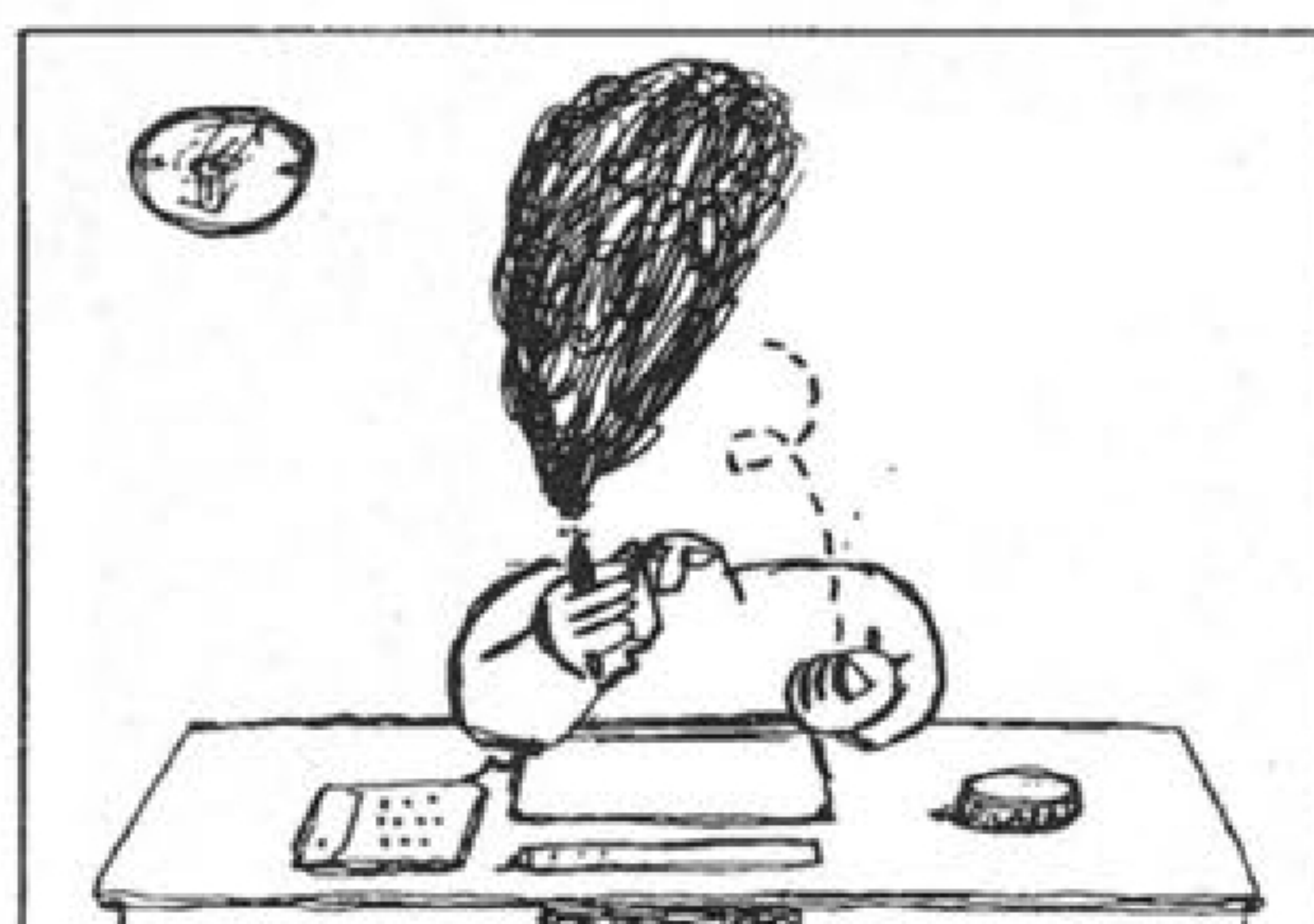
a tendency towards spectacle and costume. The 30s may have given us Griersonian public service documentaries, but it was also the decade of Korda's lavish historical epics. British television may be honoured for the gritty black and white docu-dramas of *Play for Today*, but it is equally lauded for its own contribution to British costume drama in the form of the serialisation of classics such as *Jane Eyre* and *Treasure Island* for children and the 'adult' serials whose most recent examples are the impressive *Clarissa* and the lamentable *The Scarlet and the Black*.

Knowing how important British television is in encouraging trends, it was critical that the BBC's much heralded, expensive and extensive *Middlemarch* (c. 380 minutes) should push back the boundaries of the period serial as Campion has re-imagined the gothic romance in *The Piano*. Unfortunately, on the basis of the first episode, it does no such thing. What is so disappointing is that director Anthony Page has committed himself to what he imagines to be dutiful faithfulness, shooting scenes as if they were the Dutch paintings George Eliot so much admired. Page seems not to know that the camera might move (contrast the obsessive restlessness of Scorsese's in *The Age of Innocence*), there is no voiceover, and generally there is no attempt to find a filmic equivalent for the novel's giddy moves between the subjectivity of the characters and theoretical and historical reflection.

This *Middlemarch* is period drama as heritage, film made for export and to show the government that the corporation can still do all the things Ministers remember from their childhood. One can only hope either that the series gets better, or that it isn't used as a template for future period movies and drama, either on film or television. Campion's and Scorsese's period films point towards the future; *Middlemarch's* gaze is fixed unremittingly on the past.

JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'What is it about the Frogs Jerry? We slog our guts out to fill their silver screens with skilfully dubbed Yankee film stars, we pump millions into Europe to promote movies that died here in the first weekend & what do we get from them? A load of "merde"... if you'll excuse my French.'

The business

● Can it be only last year that we – admittedly with a big push from that respected organ, *The Sunday Times* – all took Michael Medved's self-promotional proclamations about violence in Hollywood films so seriously? Well, he's at it again. In the last month or so, Medved has come up with not just one but two statements of the kind which this columnist considers in dubious taste, to say the least.

The first came when Jane Campion won both the New York and the Los Angeles Film Critics Best Director awards for *The Piano*, whereas Medved – as he made clear – felt they should have gone to Steven Spielberg for *Schindler's List*. "Unfortunately," he wrote sourly in his home-base paper, the Rupert Murdoch-owned *New York Post*, "there may be an element of pure sentimentality in Campion's competitive edge."

The reason for his colleagues' sentimentality, he went on, was the fact that, shortly after receiving her Palme d'Or from Cannes, Campion gave birth to a son who died after only 12 days. When the article was attacked on both coasts by critics and others who pointed out that Campion's personal life had nothing to do with the awards, Medved retorted that this piece of news had been something "very public. It's not like I'm blowing some kind of private story." Well, you may think that, Mr Medved.

Let's move on to another little piece of sensitive scribbling. It has to do with *In the Name of the Father* – Jim Sheridan's film based on the trial of the Guildford Four – and, in particular, with Daniel Day-Lewis' stunning performance as Gerry Conlon. For those lucky enough not to have seen the 2 January issue of the *Sunday Times Magazine* (prop: R. Murdoch), Medved's argument is that Day-Lewis is obsessive (because he immerses himself too deeply in his roles) and naive (because he believes passionately in certain things, notably that the British government has played an active role in the history of Ireland).

Medved's view of Day-Lewis is based on a number of second-hand opinions,

some of them archly unattributed, the most outspoken on the grounds that its source wants his name withheld "because it seems almost heretical to question the sanity of an Oscar-winning star". Medved, the implication goes, is a courageous heretic who speaks the truth that Murdoch's readers need to be told. "According to widespread speculation prior to the film's release," he writes bravely, "British filmgoers may not forgive [Day-Lewis] for lending his immense prestige to a project that, despite its well-advertised efforts at balance and restraint, may arouse new sympathy for the butchery of the IRA."

It is impossible to conceive that anyone could see the film and believe it was likely to create sympathy for the IRA. And it is disappointing that any journalist would cite something as vague as "widespread speculation" to support such allegations. Similarly, what kind of person would bring up a film-maker's personal tragedy because a vote didn't go his way?

Not to say, though, that UIP won't have a few problems with 'In the Name of the Father' in this broad-minded and tolerant country of ours. Mr Busy happened to enthuse about the film to an acquaintance – a middle-aged, cultured and well-educated professional woman – the week before the 'Sunday Times' piece appeared.

The mere mention that it was about the Guildford Four was enough to override all interest in whether or not it was a good film. "Do you believe they did it?" she asked aggressively. "I do." Which, of course, is precisely how Mr Plod approached the (now discredited) interrogation of Conlon, Hill, Richardson and Armstrong.

● On to more comfortable matters, to wit a New Year's reflection on How Times Change. A decade ago, we held the following truths to be self-evident.

1. That Disney was a creatively over-the-hill film company that made most of its money out of theme parks.

2. That the continuous 25-year decline in UK cinema admissions made it likely that, by 1990, there wouldn't be any cinemas left outside London.

3. That Japanese industry in general – and the electronics business in particular – were to the world economy what the Sash is to Ian Paisley. Let's update those beliefs for 1994, shall we?

First: thanks to an extraordinarily successful diversification plan in the mid-80s, Disney is now the American film business' most successful company. Its theme parks are, of course, another matter.

In particular, the crisis at EuroDisney throws interesting light on the cultural differences between the US and Europe. It's not just a question of climate: we Europeans have less disposable income and are unconvinced by the idea of shelling out a large chunk of it for the dubious pleasure of having our lives organised for a day. But it's



More trouble: Daniel Day-Lewis as Gerry Conlon, under attack by Michael Medved

the question of marketing that I find most interesting. Attend any of the self-important 'film business' get-togethers organised by merchant bankers, European cultural organisations or consultants of various shapes and sizes, and you will be told one thing above all: we Europeans need to market our films like the Americans do. No good pointing out that, outside their country of origin, most European films have less marketing hooks than the Corby Trouser-Press: for the organisers of the above seminars and workshops, marketing comes under the heading of something that, by definition, European film-makers cannot do.

Presenting it as the solution to the woes of the European film business thus serves two functions: it guarantees the continuing need for over-paid marketing consultants and ensures the future of over-priced seminars on European film-making.

Well, EuroDisney was the most carefully and comprehensively marketed venture this century, with suppliers of every leisure-related product – from cross-Channel ferries to crisps – lured into tie-in deals by the marketing-mad Disney organisation. And why didn't it work? Simple: because people didn't want it.

It is rare to see a high-powered American marketing campaign misfire so spectacularly. And it is particularly instructive to see American marketing strategies failing to work on a grand scale in Europe.

Not that they'll learn. The same week that brought the first rumours of a EuroDisney shutdown also brought news that Warner Bros was buying out Bavaria Studios' loss-making Bottrop-Kirchhellen film theme park, situated in the Ruhr valley. Warners even persuaded the Nordrhein-Westfalen Landesregierung to cough up a sizeable donation to the purchase price on the grounds that the theme park would create an estimated 900 jobs.

Perhaps the Landesregierung should have checked with the local authorities in the Paris region first.

● Second: "The real crisis in British cinema is not in production but in distribution and exhibition," wrote

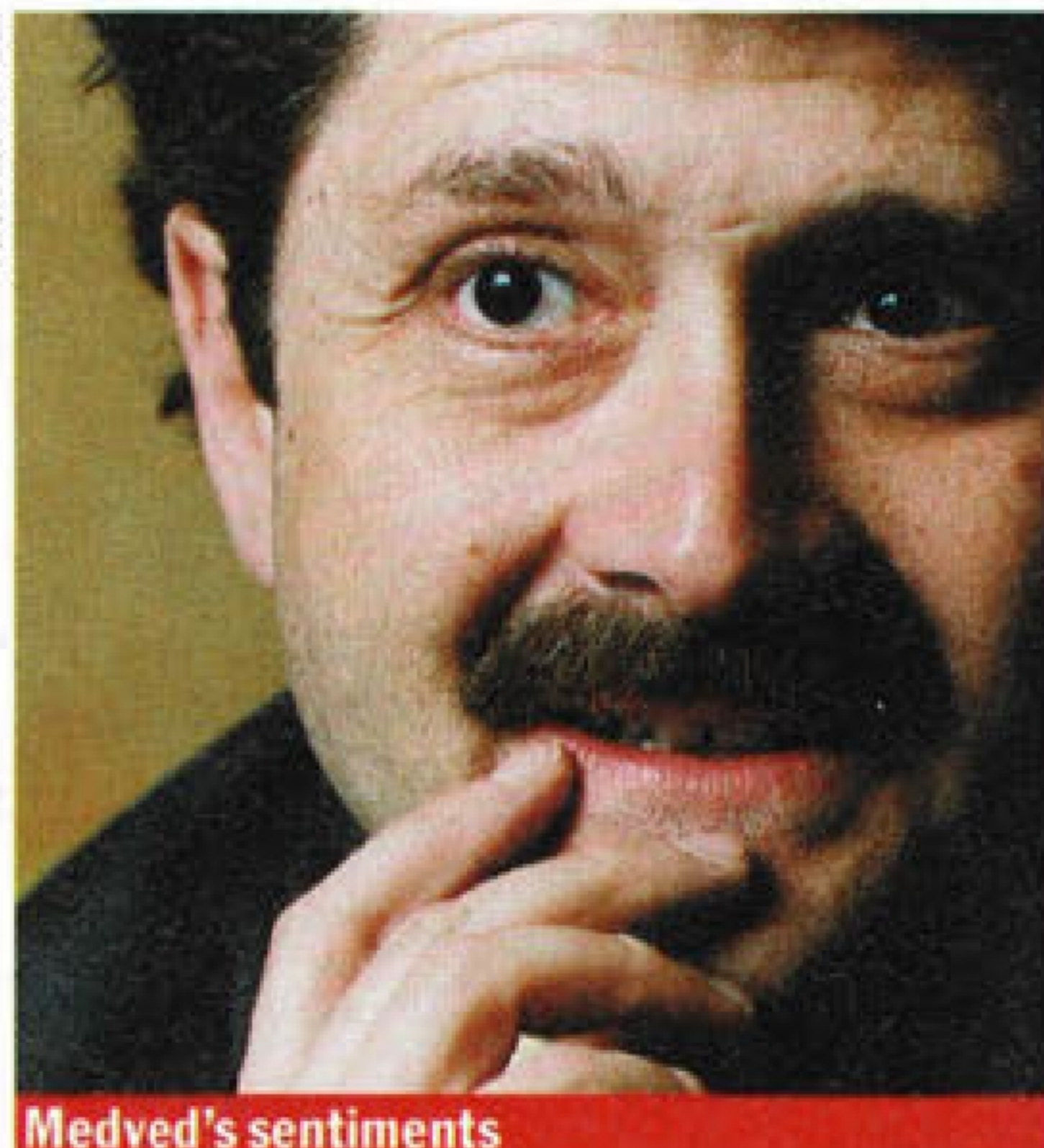
Nick Roddick in *British Cinema Now* in 1984, supporting the argument with a series of graphs that plunged downwards like the ones on office walls in newspaper cartoons. Wrong. We still have a production crisis – if anything, a worse one than in 1984, when the Channel 4 boom had yet to deflate – but exhibition and distribution are doing very nicely now that they're controlled by even fewer companies (which is called rationalisation).

From an all-time low of around 60 million in 1982, cinema admissions are now firmly back over the 100 million mark (110 million is the 1994 estimate). The multiplex revolution – as unthinkable as out-of-town superstores ten years ago – now ensures that cinemagoers throughout the country are provided with the same limited selection of new films, and are seeing them in ever greater numbers. That is called a maturing market.

Sorry, Nick, but the real crisis in British cinema is that, at the bottom of the cinemagoing slump, the Thatcher government abolished the Eady Levy, which channelled a small percentage of box-office revenue back into indigenous film production. Nowadays we have British Screen – an energetic and sensible organisation, to be sure, but one which relies essentially on goodwill rather than the entitlement implied by Eady. Still, with a government that believes its God-given role is to dismantle the Health Service, complaining about the abolition of Eady seems somewhat futile.

Third: the woes of the Japanese economy in general, and of the electronics business in particular, are well documented. Contrary to what we were all saying ten years ago, there are only so many television sets, VCRs and personal stereos you can sell before the world has what it needs. But who would have thought Japanese megacorporations would

MICHAEL POWELL



Medved's sentiments

one day be making more money out of movies than out of machines?

Here are some figures which speak for themselves. In November 1993, Sony as a whole announced a 23.7 per cent fall in profits for the second fiscal quarter, while profits for Sony Music and Sony Pictures Entertainment (Columbia Pictures to you and me) were up by 1.4 per cent (it would have been a lot more if the yen had not appreciated by 18 per cent against the dollar over the same period). If SPE could do that in a quarter which contained 'Last Action Hero', think what they could have done if they'd had a decent film.

● Don't expect any tabloid snaps of Robert De Niro as Frankenstein's

creature in the Coppola-produced movie, directed by and starring K. Branagh. Some such snaps were apparently spirited off the film's closed set at Pinewood, but their publication was legally blocked on the grounds that De Niro's make-up was a copyrighted product which the film's makers had the sole right to exploit.

Too bad for Sylvester Stallone that the blurry nude pic of him in the ice block surreptitiously taken on the set of *Demolition Man* – and in particular the vaguely glimpsable part of him not usually seen on the big screen – didn't qualify for the same protection. And too bad for the tabloid which

printed the picture, by the way, that the body in the ice – willy and all – was a latex model.

Readers of these pages will have heard about the recent right-wing political aspirations of Italian media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, until recently a high-profile fellow traveller with the disgraced (but previously all-powerful) Italian Socialist Party. Less coverage has been given to the inexorable unravelling of Penta Film, the sprawling conglomerate Berlusconi set up at the end of the 80s with the father-and-son team of Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori.

For a while, Penta looked like it was going to take over every aspect of film production, distribution and exhibition in Italy, if not

Europe, if not the world. In 1991-92, hardly a major film was produced or shown in Italy without some involvement from Penta.

A company called PentAmerica was set up in Los Angeles and made a series of big-budget disasters, notably 'Man Trouble' and 'Folks!' before it had the plug discreetly pulled on it. And there was talk of a European distribution network to rival UIP.

Even before the death of Cecchi Gori Senior in November, things had started to go seriously wrong. Just before Christmas, Penta International, the London-based sales arm for the company, was quietly shut down. The cinema chain is now being broken up, and the major Italian movies – which, to date, have included such titles as 'Volere volare' and 'Mediterraneo' – have been forgotten.

Funny how this always happens with European media empires. Remember Goldcrest?

● Come to think of it, it's not been a much better year for those European moguls who set up shop in the United States. Dino De Laurentiis Communications is no more, for example, although the energetic entrepreneur still has a number of production irons in the fire.

And the equally energetic Menahem Golan, featured previously on these pages, has not been faring much better. His latest venture, the 21st Century Film Corporation, set up in 1989, was recently put into Chapter 7 (involuntary bankruptcy) by its creditors, headed by the French bank Crédit Lyonnais and the Hollywood craft and talent unions, who claimed it owed them \$20 million.

Although Golan subsequently managed to convert the Chapter 7 into Chapter 11 (a voluntary bankruptcy filing which, under US law, gives a company breathing space to restructure), the original Chapter 7 petition contained detailed allegations of his plans to do a runner and start up again under a new name in London. Meanwhile, on exactly the same day that all this was happening in Los Angeles, producers Peter Davis and William Panzer lost Christopher Lambert, star of their long-delayed *Highlander III*, which had just started filming in Montreal, because they wouldn't (or couldn't) put Lambert's not-inconsiderable salary into escrow.

This may come as some consolation to people who worked on the original *Highlander* at Pinewood, who may well have wished they had had their salaries placed into escrow.

Lambert at work



EUROPEAN CENSORS Snip and cut

In any given week a Spanish child can watch an average of 878 fights, 420 shootouts, 30 kidnappings, 30 torture scenes, 30 attempted killings, eight suicides and a few rape scenes on television. Spanish children – and their British counterparts – watch three and a half to four hours television per day.

Britain may be alone in experiencing a 'moral panic' about the media, but across Europe, where each nation has its own idiosyncratic approach to television and video regulation, there is a shift in popular opinion in favour of stricter supervision. The controversy aroused by *Child's Play 3* in the UK prompted pay TV station Canal+ Spain to conduct an unprecedented poll among its subscribers in December as to when the movie should be broadcast. Overwhelmingly (75.6 per cent), they opted for the post-midnight slot.

"Video is closer to television [than cinema] and the public expects the standards to be similar," claims Guy Phelps of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The BBFC, which has banned three films outright in the past eight years, attempts to react to swings in the public mood. Fifteen years ago, it received an equal number of libertarian and hawkish complaints. "Nowadays, one hears little from people who think that we're too tough, but there is a lot of pressure on us from the other side," admits Phelps.

Film distributors sympathise with the balancing act a censor has to perform, although this does not mean that they approve of censorship *per se*. Metro Tartan has released 80 films on video; thus far, only two have been cut. The company has a policy of specifying any cuts made to a film on the sleeve of the cassette. Hamish McAlpine of Metro Tartan believes the pressure on the BBFC derives from



a right-wing puritanical movement sparked by a string of violent films last year (*Man Bites Dog*, *Bad Lieutenant*, *Reservoir Dogs*). The BBFC has not yet granted a video certificate for *Reservoir Dogs*.

"Nanny is definitely trying to look after us all," agrees David Aukin, head of drama at Channel 4, which takes great pride in transmitting films uncut – as opposed to the "airline" version. Aukin cites the fact that no US network would buy Channel 4's *Tales of the City* unless the gay storyline was changed. The series will now go out on cable channel HBO.

Spain is more liberal than most other countries. According to Alfredo Garcia Iglesias, president of the Spanish Video Federation, there is "no censorship" in Spain. Last April all Spanish broadcasters signed an ethics code, which they have consistently violated ever since. This "gentleman's agreement" is not law, and unless it becomes so, Garcia Iglesias believes nobody will pay any attention to it.

The anarchy can be deceptive. Phelps argues that places such as Spain and eastern Europe, where regulations are lax, are experiencing a reaction to decades of repression and dictatorship. He maintains that the trend throughout Europe is conservative. Indeed, the Spanish

authorities are increasingly worried about the "effects violent and erotic content may have on the young". Macaulay Culkin's latest film, *The Good Son* (which was withdrawn from theatrical release by 20th Century Fox in the UK due to the James Bulger case), has received an 18 certificate in Spain.

Beatriz de Armas, sub-director general at the Spanish Film Institute, says that media reports on the effect of violence on children have influenced the ratings commission. "We are becoming stricter in our criteria for violent films, and *The Good Son* is a prime example of this sensitivity."

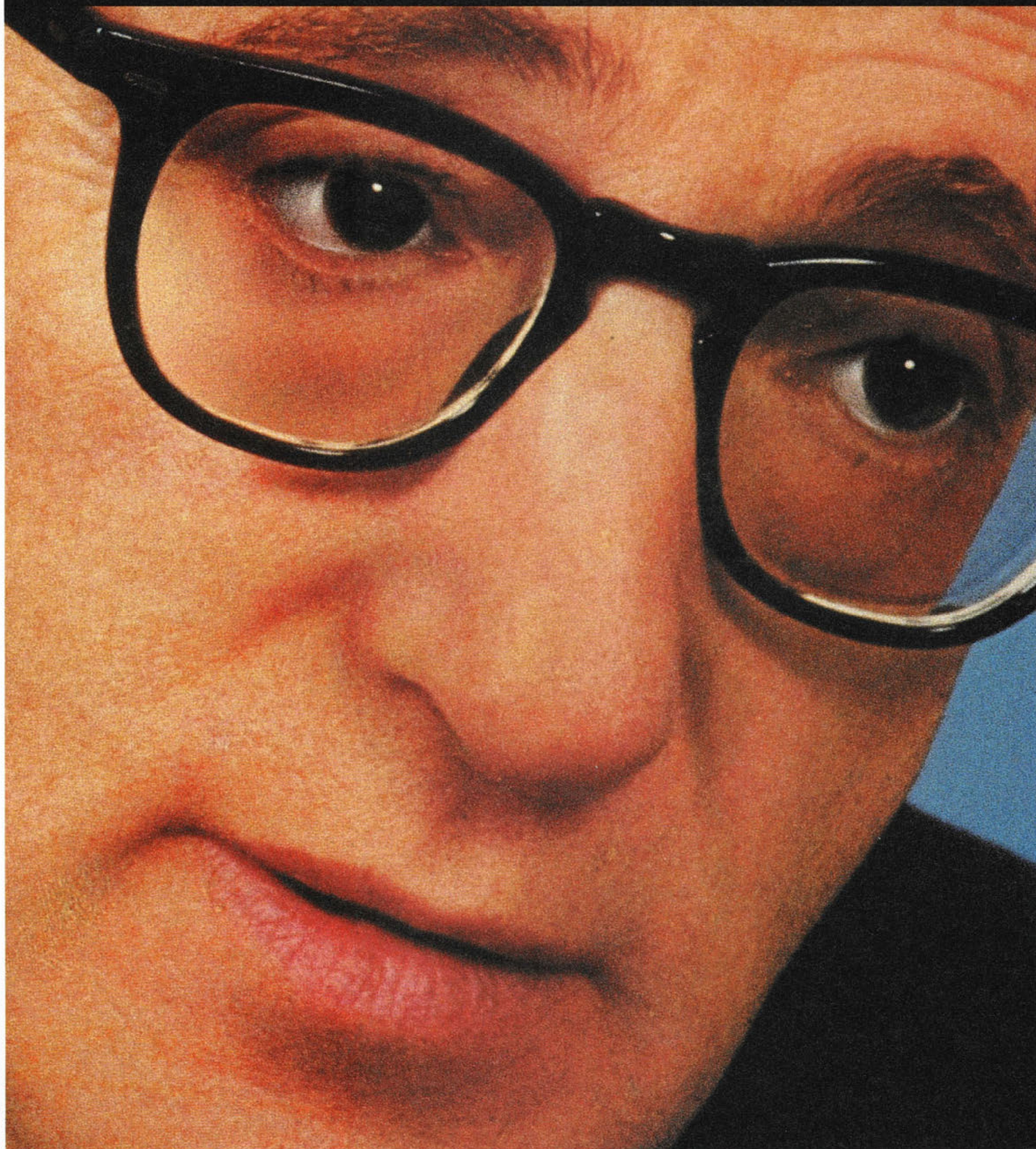
In Germany, where censorship is formally forbidden under the constitution, concern over television violence has led to the formation of a new organisation, the FSF, an association of private broadcasters committed to voluntary control. Films rated 18 in the cinema or on video are especially controversial, even if they are transmitted after the 11pm watershed.

German video retailers tend only to stock 16 rated films, because if a film receives an 18 rating then there is a risk that a complaint from the public may lead to it being placed on an index by the Bundesprüfstelle: once indexed, a film cannot be advertised or promoted. Moreover, people under 18 are not permitted to enter standard video stores, most of which in Germany have blinds drawn across their windows as if they sold only pornography. Datty Ruth of VCL Carolco had to fight for seven years to get *The Terminator* and *The Evil Dead* off the index of proscribed films.

He recently applied for a 16 certificate for the 18 cinema release *Universal Soldier*, and was told to make 68 cuts, totalling 18 minutes. But, he's informed, it's even worse in Finland. Benedict Carver

Woody Allen on 'Manhattan Murder Mystery', entertainment and Jewishness. By Jonathan Romney

SHELTER FROM THE STORM



● Why does interviewing Woody Allen feel like an experiment in virtual reality? I'm sitting in a London hotel room with this small, quiet-spoken, middle-aged man in a navy blazer and beige slacks, and we're talking civilly about films, as you might with any American director who's in town to promote new product.

Yet I'm half convinced that this cannot possibly be Woody Allen. It could be a hologram, or a well-schooled impersonator – although the familiar yammering verbal rhythms have given way to the formal composure of interview etiquette, he looks and sounds too uncannily like Woody Allen to be true. I'm about as persuaded of his reality as I would be if Groucho Marx were sitting there in coat-tails and painted-on moustache, or Michael Jackson in full regalia, or Roger Rabbit. I've seen his films, after all, and I *know* that Woody Allen is not real – he's a made-up character.

A Golem out of control

Over the years Woody Allen has come to denote less a real person than an assemblage of ideas and images – a brand name that stands not just for a body of work, but for a stance, a style of humour and high seriousness. The name also implies a repertoire of characteristics that have been attached to fictional figures such as Alvy Singer, Sandy Bates, the protean Zelig. 'Woody Allen' the persona is as much a cartoon icon as Chaplin or Groucho Marx, and like them he is easily identified by the physical 'props' that stand for the whole: the twitchy demeanour, the glasses, the washed-out beige wardrobe, the scraggy hair.

The difference is that no one would dream of identifying the 'Groucho' persona with Groucho Marx the man. With Woody Allen, however, not only are the physical characteristics unmistakably his own, but aspects of his supposedly secretive, yet in fact unusually well-publicised life (the reclusiveness, the psychoanalysis, the complex romantic history) crop up in his films with obsessive regularity, apparently all but untranslated. A simulacrum of himself, Woody Allen is, in the terms of Jewish myth, his own Golem: a construct brought into life through the Word, and become bigger than the real, effectively eclipsing it.

It may be that the Golem has got out of control. The blurring of Allen's real and fantasy selves was heightened by his split with Mia Farrow, followed by the revelations about his relationship with her adopted daughter Soon-Yi Previn and allegations of child abuse concerning Dylan Farrow. When the story broke, many commentators seemed to take for granted the conflation of Allen's life and art, while some expressed a feeling of betrayal at the realisation that the wise, sensitive, lovable figure depicted in the films may not have been real after all. The conflation remained so complete and unconscious that Woody-watchers could now scan the films for 'evidence', for lines which would yield the truth of the matter. At the first press screenings of *Husbands and Wives* (1992), a film generally interpreted as telling a version of the split, certain remarks elicited gales of laughter for their apparently revelatory apt-

ness. When Allen's character Gabe Roth said, "I've learned nothing over the years," it was seen as a terrible admission. By a peculiar reversal, the real-life story was now being read as an extension of the films – Woody's latest scrape.

Though little could be known of the truth of the case, even sceptics wondered whether the Allen persona could survive the exposure unimpaired. As Adam Gopnik recently argued in the *New Yorker*, "What has really been put in doubt by Woody Allen's tribulations is his judgement, and with it, his place as an arbiter of manners – his ability to tell cool from uncool, and make that distinction stick." Gopnik continues, "If you were susceptible, the discriminations were so inspiring that the resulting confusion between life and art wasn't just between Allen's life and his art. It was between *your* life and his art."

What was important to Allen's public was their own investment in his persona. His films, especially the New York comedies of manners *Annie Hall* (1977) and *Manhattan* (1979), provided a lifestyle template for a generation of would-be sophisticates. What was at stake was not only a set of supposedly unassailable high-culture values – most famously, the list of favourite things at the end of *Manhattan* – but also a comic attitude that made defensive hostility into a form of heroism. Watching the Allen anti-hero, you could believe that his anxiety, ineptitude and pusillanimity were simply the flipside of a sceptical stoicism in the face of the glitzier, shallower aspects of the world.

There may be a hidden agenda to Allen's current bout of promotion – to remind his public that he is not primarily a pilloried press bogeyman, but a purveyor of amusements with a new film, *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, to sell. He emphasises the 'entertainment' angle with unexpected zeal, possibly because he and/or his distributors Tri-Star – it's the last film of their deal before he departs for his friend Jean Doumanian's Sweetland Films – agree with the widely held view that the image of Woody Allen as an anguished moral philosopher won't wash right now. How does he feel, then, about his fans' need to invest his persona with so much 'reality'?

"I've had problems with that, I wish they would not do that. In the same sense that you can't identify Charlie Chaplin on screen with Charlie Chaplin off screen, or Buster Keaton or whoever else – they're not the same person. There are some little carry-overs, but I'm not the person on screen that I am in life. I'm a completely different person – or not *completely*, but certainly a different person, who makes those films. They're creations, they're acts of imagination.

"People have thought about me that I'm intellectual, I'm not; that I'm inept, that I'm too Jewish, that I'm not Jewish enough, considering I'm Jewish; that I'm a loser with women, always with women... They're all simplistic things that they come away with.

"And sometimes it costs me some affection or loyalty because after a picture like *Stardust Memories*, people come away thinking, 'Oh, it's Woody Allen saying he has contempt for his own audience.' But it wasn't me. I was making a

fictional story about a director who is an artist – I happened to make him a director because I know about that – who is depressed because he has everything in life and is still miserably unhappy. When I was making that film, I didn't remember incidents that happened to me, and didn't reflect my feeling precisely. There'd be an overlap in one or two areas, but it was a complete work of fiction."

It seems a little disingenuous. By the very fact of playing the role and recognising the overlaps, surely he's openly rehearsing aspects of his life?

"Well, if I did then it was a mistake. Then I should have cast Dustin Hoffman. I played the role because I naturally played the roles I was writing. In retrospect, I should have had someone else play the part, then at least no matter how people responded to the film it would have toned down the notion that it was me. Or maybe I shouldn't have made him a film director, maybe that would have helped.

"People thought that *Husbands and Wives* was an autobiographical movie. They thought Mia was playing Mia, and I was playing me. The truth of the matter is, I finished the script, I gave it to Mia and I asked her which character she wanted to play. She was going to play the Judy Davis character, and then decided to play the other character because it would be shorter and left her more free time.

"It was not an autobiographical movie, I made up all those characters and all those things. It came out at a time when I was having a personal crisis that was reported in the newspapers, but there had been a million things printed in the press that were way off the mark, that were simply not true at all, and the fact that this was autobiographical was one of them."

Would he now be tempted to opt for anonymity, to try to disappear from his films altogether?

"I have certainly cooled it down at the moment. I'm not even in the movie I'm starting to shoot [reportedly titled *Bullets over Broadway* or *The Artist*, and starring John Cusack and Mary-Louise Parker]. If there's any way I can disabuse people of the notion that I'm the character in my movies I'll do it... On the other hand, I have a feeling I'm not going to be able to. I have a feeling I'll probably wind up just doing the ideas I think of, because I won't be able to do anything else. When a film is over and I have to get a new one, I'm thrilled to have an idea. And if the idea is about me, and I'm playing a writer in New York, and I get involved with a woman, and the audiences see it as my real life, then we'll both have to live with that."

Fred Astaire, not Bergman

Effectively a genre movie, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* certainly seems to keep the real at bay. "I wanted to do this murder mystery because I felt I had had such a painful year I was going to indulge myself and do it and have a good time." A diversion in many senses, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* will reassure anyone who, like the much-quoted aliens in *Stardust Memories*, preferred the early, funny films. A pure anachronism, it's a comedy thriller in the ►

◀ style of *The Thin Man* movies, with Allen and Diane Keaton bantering urbanely in the Nick and Nora Charles roles. It revives an idea originally intended for *Annie Hall*, but rejected by Allen as “too insubstantial”. Now revamped in collaboration with his old writing partner Marshall Brickman, it features Allen in his familiar nice-guy nebbish role as a book editor embroiled in a drama which, on the surface at least, is entirely someone else’s – the possibility that the man across the hall is a wife murderer.

When Diane Keaton stepped into the co-star role originally earmarked for Mia Farrow, her presence gave the film a nostalgic twist, harking back to Allen’s 70s urban box-office peak, and to a more innocent, utopian vision of city life – a feeling expressed immediately in the opening aerial shot of the city by night, set to an exuberant treatment of Cole Porter’s ‘I Happen to Like New York’. It’s an affirmation of faith that, 17 years after *Annie Hall*, there are lobsters still for tea.

Allen insists that the film is *entertainment* – a term that seems to have become a bottom-line reference for him. It’s unexpected to find the director of *Interiors* (1978) and *Another Woman* (1988) saying, as he did in *Rolling Stone* last year, “It’s great when people can go into a movie house for an hour and a half and just see Fred Astaire or Abbott and Costello... They’ve had a breather from the storm – and that should be the function of films – not *Bicycle Thieves* or *Grand Illusion* or Bergman... You may really be serving people best by giving them a little light refreshment.”

Kookiness turned tetchy

Allen insists that the new film is precisely that, although its numerous Hitchcock references underpin themes of guilt, paranoia and voyeurism that are straight out of *Rear Window*. “I don’t agree with Truffaut that there’s great meaning in Hitchcock. There are four or five of his films that I just love to see over and over again, but I see them as pure entertainment, pure airport reading. And I see this movie as pure airport reading. This is just the kind of movie I would have loved to go and see when I was younger. Just pure enjoyment, non-confrontational, non-riddled with exploration of character and psychology.”

But what gives the story resonance is that the disturbance is not confined to what goes on next door. The murder mystery turns upside down the life of Larry and Carol Lipton (Allen and Keaton), whose apparently solid marriage is riddled with hairline fractures. It is part of the film’s energy that it attempts to contain with jovial slapstick an altogether disturbing situation. The concluding ‘up’ note is characteristically ambivalent – the Liptons’ staid existence has been given a lift, but perhaps no more than that.

“Right, they’re not changed radically. It’s just an experience for them – an ultimately funny experience when they look back on it, but harrowing while it’s happening. A friend said to me, ‘To keep this marriage together, they’re going to have to have one of those murders every year,’ and it’s true. But I didn’t want to get into the seriousness of what was afflict-

ing them. I felt I could afflict them with a minor problem and it would be good enough for this story.”

In a way, it’s the very lightness of the film that strikes its most jarring note. When Woody Allen starts to talk, like any Hollywood box-office maven, about escapism, you’re tempted to act the shrink and invoke ideas of resistance or denial. The all-out slapstick of some sequences in the film – of which only some work – seems like a hysterical denial of the story’s more distressing strands. Partly because it evokes a recognisably everyday image of New York life, the film retains a strong sense of unease. It deals with worries that can’t be brushed under the comic carpet – the tenuous bonds that keep couples together and that might easily turn to hostility or worse; the fear of ageing and losing touch with past energies (Allen and Keaton resemble their former selves, but they are frailer, their kookiness turned tetchy, and their characters live a boxed-in life that Alvy and Annie never did). Like *Rear Window*, it’s also about the terrifying possibility that there might be no gap whatsoever between reality and your worst imaginings. The frantic energies the film devotes to seeming throwaway look like an exercise in damage limitation. Could it be that Allen is now simply reluctant to be perceived as serious?

If so, it may be because his seriousness has increasingly alienated his public. The spirit of high philosophical inquiry that reached its apogee in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989) and *Shadows and Fog* (1991) seems something of an anachronism – a linchpin for Allen’s idol Ingmar Bergman, but no longer a major preoccupation of contemporary cinema, even at its most serious. In *Manhattan*, Allen’s character imagines a story about people “constantly creating these real unnecessary neurotic problems for themselves ‘cause it keeps them from dealing with more unsolvable, terrifying problems about the universe.” In this line, Allen seemed to upbraid himself for his preoccupation with the ephemera of his characters’ romantic confusion (which is what his public likes) when he could have been dealing with weightier imponderables (which he did in *Shadows and Fog*, only to discover that his public didn’t want to know). Perhaps the big metaphysical questions have little to do with most people’s experience or interests, and when raised in cinema often come across as a purely academic distraction.

“No, I don’t feel that way entirely, these questions have to do with the very fabric of everybody’s life. That’s what they are immersed in from the day they’re born... I feel that in real life people do create all kinds of obsessive neurotic details so they don’t have to confront larger issues. If your problem is getting food for

the evening, you don’t have time to sit around and reflect on the purpose of life and existential *ennui*, because you have another more pressing problem. But when the pressing problems are solved, then you start to think, ‘Gee, what does it all mean, what is the purpose of this? I’ve got it and then what? I’m older, life is short and it doesn’t seem to have much purpose.’ You start thinking about those things – and then if someone yells ‘Fire!’ and the building’s on fire, it’s all done. I think it’s important for people in their daily denial, which they need for survival, to create stupid little problems so as not to have to confront the larger problems which are scary, unsolvable and make you depressed.”

Laughter in the dark

Allen’s films are generally least satisfying when they seem to be aiming for one of two poles – to be unequivocally funny or unequivocally serious. What most fascinates is the mercurial way they shift between sobriety and flippancy, between the transcendent imponderables and the nagging everyday kvetches. It’s a cliché to say that his films, like his persona, are ‘neurotic’, but there is a particular neurosis about them that most reveals its discontents when it appears to be dismissing them, and vice versa.

This movement seems indissolubly linked to Allen’s Jewishness. The great truism about Jewish humour is that it evolved as a mechanism for conjuring away anxieties that were too painful to address directly. But in Allen’s films, this offhanded approach seems to be revealing agonies with increasing explicitness. Jewishness has become more and more prominent in his recent films – in the rabbinical moralists who haunt *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, in ‘Oedipus Wrecks’, the ultimate Jewish mother sketch from the *New York Stories* portmanteau (1989), and in the much maligned *Shadows and Fog*, an extended homage to Bergman, Kafka and German Expressionist cinema.

Shadows and Fog seemed confused – but, as Joyce would have said, it’s natural that things look confused in the fog. Released out of sequence in Britain, after *Husbands and Wives*, it was generally written off as a naive folly which hugely overstated its themes. But *Shadows and Fog* is a *film maudit* in the best sense – not just because no one wanted to see it, but because in a fascinating way it doesn’t quite make sense. True, the overstatement is flagrant – themes are both presented visually and debated verbally in a manner that combines Strindbergian dramaturgy with Talmudic dispute. Yet there is also a curious understatement, as if the film were afraid to say what it is really about.

What is never named, although it is alluded to obsessively, is Jewishness. There are references to the Holocaust, to pogrom-like round-ups, to a disappearing, scapegoated Jewish community. We can’t help sympathising with the beleaguered hero Kleinman, but at the same time we wonder why Allen would want to revive such an extreme version of the ‘little man’ archetype, particularly when it embodies such a negative myth of the Jew as eternal victim. Literally a wandering Jew, Kleinman is abstracted from any Jewish community, though this is in any case doomed to invisibil-

‘I see Hitchcock as pure entertainment, pure airport reading. My new movie is airport reading too’

ity. Jewishness, although the very basis of Kleinman's being, is represented in an entirely negative light, like a transcendental curse.

The most direct allusion comes in an altogether alarming one-liner. "My people pray in a different language," says Kleinman. "For all I know, they were requesting their own troubles." It's a remarkably loaded line – in the payoff, "my people" suddenly become "they", the verb moves to the past tense, and Kleinman covers his tracks with "For all I know". Triply dissociating himself from Jewish identity, Kleinman also perpetuates a myth of eternal Jewish masochism – a notion that finds a friendlier expression in Allen's usual self-tormenting *schlemihl* persona, but takes on a more threatening resonance in a film ostensibly about anti-semitism.

"It seems to me a completely accurate portrayal of standard feelings Jews have about Jews. Maybe other people have them too. But it's certainly a prevalent feeling that Jews have about Jews, that they have been a victimised people, which indeed they have been."

But surely the idea of calling down your own troubles seems a dangerous one in a film that evokes the ambience of pre-Nazi Germany?

"Right, but one cannot take a joke in a movie to mean that much. It's a line, it's a joke in a film, and to impute to it more meaning than it really has... What is the implication of people worrying about it? That there will be people massing, and isolating the line and putting it on slogans? These are jokes in movies.

"But it does express an American-Jewish feeling, where people have often been raised to pray in a language they have never understood a single word of, and here are these people being admonished by their parents to come to a synagogue when they have no religious feeling whatsoever. So in a certain sense I lump the Jewish religion in with all other religions as an organised religion and consequently baneful. I think all organised religions are not to the good of the human race. What could be more preposterous than taking a young boy and forcing him to go to a synagogue and pray to God in a language in which he has no idea what he's saying? He could just as easily be calling down his own troubles, he could be saying anything.

"Each religion has its great list of preposterous notions and even worse than preposterous, even quite harmful. That's as silly a notion as anything, to be praying, to be allegedly speaking to God... The Jewish religious experience, the Christian religious experience, it's all guys in rooms writing rules for the propagation of their own security and power and peace of mind, it has no connection whatsoever with God, if he exists. If a God exists, these guys don't have the faintest idea what language you're supposed to speak to him in, they don't know where to begin.

"If anything, all the religions have demonstrated wasteful foolishness. They've earned scorn, not reverence. I'm not saying that a person cannot be personally religious and have real feelings, but as they are organised, that in itself is all the condemnation you need."

The surprising thing is to hear from Woody Allen the disclaimer, "It's just a joke." As a

'To put too much weight on jokes, or even on art in general, has always been a mistake'



Lobsters still for tea: 'Manhattan Murder Mystery'

long-term analysand, he must surely be aware that jokes are precisely where you expect to see meaning revealed, and that exegeses of his work are invariably based on his casual one-liners.

"Right, but one still cannot take those things too seriously, they're still jokes. They're interesting from a Freudian point of view in that they may or may not reveal something, and that something they do reveal – if indeed they *do* reveal anything – is arguable as to what it is. But to put too much weight on jokes, or even art in general, has always been a mistake. I never thought art could change things. To the degree that it's entertaining, it's got a use, but that's not the thing that changes people or countries or political systems, that's usually done through political action.

"Someone can be cruel and terrible and vicious to you and you can go home and write a satire on him, it never means anything. But when you finally go and confront him and sue him or punch him on the nose, then you get something done."

If it really means nothing but escapism, you might well ask why Woody Allen makes films at all? *Shadows and Fog* seems to be largely about this question. Perhaps it's no accident when a director ends up making a film that no one wants to see – "Maybe it's too much of me to expect that an audience is going to be interested in an allegorical piece and a black and white piece and a period piece set in some anonymous European country," he shrugs. But it is precisely such films that allow film-makers to comment, as in marginalia, on their work.

Shadows and Fog concludes for the necessity of illusion and distraction in the face of worldly woes (the day is saved by a droll Bergmanesque magician); but it also proves immensely revelatory about Allen's chronic outsider complex. The film explicitly sets him apart from the rest of contemporary cinema, art-house and mainstream, and allows him to claim a mythical black and white past as his own private ghetto. In Kleinman's isolation,

Allen's fantasy of an ideal cinema is represented as a sort of transcendental Jewishness, an absolute apartness.

If Allen keeps making films, and returning habitually to something like mainstream expectations, it is also because of the basic requirement of all performers – the need to remain visible. But Woody Allen of all people should be aware of the perils of exposure, and throughout his work there is a concomitant urge to vanish that is itself no less exhibitionist; there's always the need to elicit the gasp that greets the conjurer's disappearing act. The last few films play constantly on this theme: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, with the "eyes of God" hovering over the sinning ophthalmologist Judah; *Alice* (1990), with its skittish fantasy of invisibility; 'Oedipus Wrecks', with its monstrous mother exposing the hero's embarrassment to all Manhattan; and *Shadows and Fog*, in which Kleinman, lost in the night, ponders (both fearfully and hopefully), "Maybe they have me under surveillance." *Zelig* (1983) was a parable about social conformity and the perils of fame: the chameleon man may vanish in the crowd, but it doesn't take much scanning of the cleverly doctored newsreel footage to spot a familiar sheepish smile gleaming out like a beacon. All these films articulate the recurrent message: "Are you looking?"

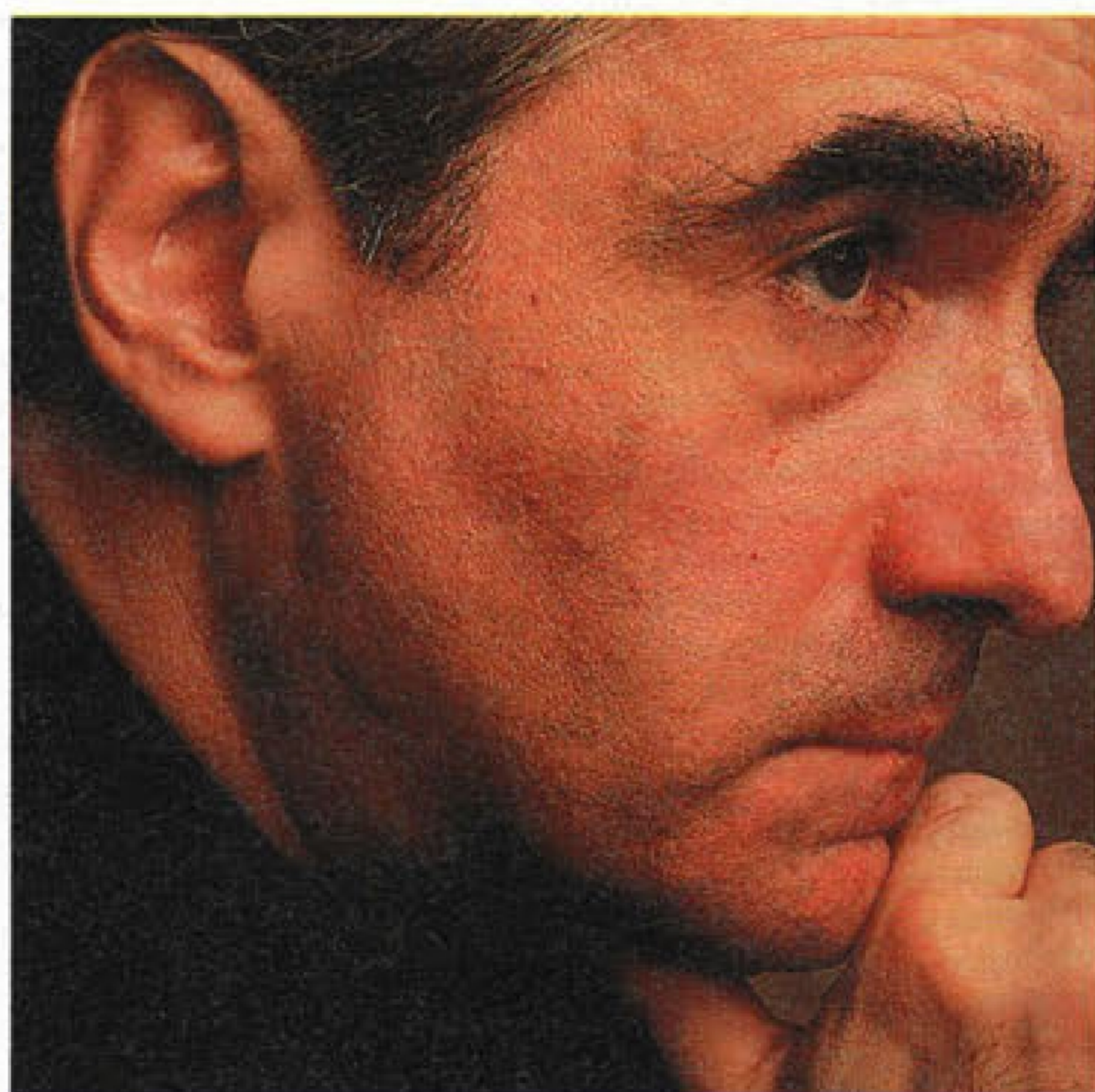
Does God get the jokes?

You could discern a religious aspect to this tendency, in keeping with the films' anxiety about the gaze of God. The overwhelming desire to be seen could be read as a need to know if God is looking, if God is reachable through any language. The misgivings Allen expresses about Judaism and prayer are an extension of a condition peculiar to the Jewish diaspora – to speak any language other than Hebrew is seen as an exile from one's own culture, but for non-Hebrew speakers, that language itself entails a further alienation. Jewish humour can be seen as responding to that very problem – it's a way of using whatever language is available to cut through the linguistic impasse and speak directly of one's condition. A surrogate holy language, the wisecrack becomes the authentic expression of the self – a hot line to the real. It's a common theological debate to wonder whether God gets jokes – Jewish humour stakes all on betting that he does.

In a more pragmatic sense, a film-maker has only one god to answer to, and that's the public. As frequently as Woody Allen turns his back on his public, he becomes aware of that deity's mounting ire and will pay it court. The most individualistic film-maker, roaming the art-house wilderness, may at times feel the need to follow that god's commands and accept a different set of priorities – and if Woody Allen should now, of all times, choose to read as the First Commandment, "Thou shalt make entertainment", that is perhaps understandable. But the Golem which has trailed him throughout his career, and which is made of a more complex clay than mere celebrity, is going to be a lot harder to appease.

'Manhattan Murder Mystery' opens on 21 January and is reviewed on page 61 of this issue

Martin Scorsese remembers reading 'The Age of Innocence' in England. He talks to Ian Christie about his love of genre, his passion for ritual, the tracking shots in the film, and why it is such a personal project



THE SCORSESE INTERVIEW

● “‘England’ means tea shops, lager louts and sun-drenched cathedral closes,” according to Terry Eagleton in a recent piece on the artifice of the national idiom. Its potency, however, is undeniable, even in unlikely quarters. A tea shop hard by a cathedral close (York Minister, in fact) was part of the setting which helped Martin Scorsese to decide in January 1987 to film Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*, a passionately restrained tale, ironic and nostalgic in equal measure, an acerbic ‘survivor’s memoir’ of *belle époque* New York. The lager louts might have seemed a more likely subject for Scorsese, but this is to underestimate the most ambitious and unpredictable film-maker at work in the United States today.

I was travelling with Scorsese to ask the questions for what was to become *Scorsese on Scorsese*. While I didn’t notice that he was reading Edith Wharton on the long train journeys, he still vividly remembers finishing *The Age of Innocence* and thinks it was this experience – the picturesque winter landscape outside coupled with the pastness which Britain represents for an American – that helped him decide on what seems to many a bizarre choice for a film-maker still identified with the lowlife exploits of Johnny Boy, Travis Bickle and Jake La Motta.

For Scorsese, his fans’ oft-repeated plea that he should make another *Mean Streets* or confine himself to the American hard-boiled genre is as mystifying as it is infuriating. His understanding of cinema is based on a respect for the idea of genre and on an appreciation of its niceties in countless local instances: not just a great gangster film or costume piece, but one made *there*, at *this* point in the national tradition, using *those* resources. It can sound to the unin-

tiated like a crazy scrambling of cinema history, but I think that for Scorsese the whole point is the poignancy of knowing that we are now irrevocably on the far side of classical filmmaking. However gifted a director is today, he or she can only be a Mannerist, condemned, like the artists who followed the High Renaissance, to echo and embellish the great unself-conscious works of the past.

And so for Scorsese, *how* he engages with tradition isn’t just movie buffery: it is a vital creative issue. Collecting films, ensuring they are preserved by studios and archives, contacting and discreetly helping the ‘great directors’ (Fellini, Kazan, Kurosawa, Powell), working with collaborators who belong to traditions he admires (Freddie Francis, Michael Ballhaus, Boris Leven, Saul Bass, Elmer Bernstein) – all these are part of the process of finding a place for himself in a post-classical era. Frederic Jameson thinks of Godard’s recent work as “a survivor’s modernism”. Scorsese’s ambition is wider: he wants to make the past – both historic and cinematic – fully visible in the present, a country we can visit and marvel at.

Set in New York in the 1870s, *The Age of Innocence* tells the story of Newland Archer, who is engaged to May Welland, of the powerful Mingott family. A ‘disgraced’ member of May’s family, Countess Ellen Olenska, returns from a disastrous marriage in Europe and is snubbed by New York society. Archer asks the powerful Van der Luyden family to host a dinner for the Countess to counter her exclusion. Archer falls in love with Ellen, but stifling social pressures prevent him from consummating their relationship and he is torn between his passion for the Countess and his life with May.

On the brink: Martin Scorsese, above; Daniel Day-Lewis as Newland Archer, the man always poised to act, right



Ian Christie: You said that the atmosphere of England, where you finished reading 'The Age of Innocence', helped you to decide to do it.

*Martin Scorsese: There was something about the timing of reading the book at that point in my life, after a long struggle to get *The Last Temptation of Christ* made, and having always wanted to make a romantic piece. There was also the popularity of *A Room with a View* and pictures like it, which seemed to make working in this style possible. But I think finishing the book while travelling around England and Scotland – I seem to remember a big snowstorm – had a lot to do with it. Then it was a matter of cleaning up my creative life so that I could do it.*

GoodFellas was being written in 1987 and when I was in England that was going to be my next film, but then we were able to slip in *The Last Temptation*. For the next two years I was mulling *The Age of Innocence* over in my head and scriptwriter Jay Cocks – who had given me the book in the first place – would come over once or twice a week, and we would discuss how to make it different from the usual theatre-bound film versions of novels.

It is surprising to hear that you were influenced by Merchant-Ivory films. Maybe you see these differently from the way we – or at least I – see them?

I only became aware of this attitude when I spoke to a British journalist while we were editing *The Age of Innocence*. He said something like, "In England we think these films are easy." Well, it's not at all easy to make this kind of film in America, especially since we no longer have studios that have all the props and sets. In fact, we were able to find most of our interiors in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx, but the neighbourhoods that used to surround them are completely gone. It's tragic. In the Merchant-Ivory films and in Polanski's *Tess*, England looks all of a piece. These films take you out of today and put you very securely in a world that looks more civilised – at least if you had enough money. And they really give you a sense of a world where it took a day to travel from one town to the next.

The foreigner's eye. Polanski shot 'Tess' in France and Merchant and Ivory, foreigners both, have created an England that seems more real, certainly more attractive, than the real thing. In any case, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out, the great English writers of the twentieth century weren't English at all: "They were a Pole, two or three Americans and a clutch of Irishmen." Englishness seems to be in the eye of the beholder.

I like the beautiful detail in a lot of the Merchant-Ivory films that use English settings. One wide shot says it all. When Jim Ivory shoots a period room, the eye is there. Perhaps it's more in his cultural make-up to understand the decor, so that when he places the camera, it's right for that room, you really see the room and all its detail. I feel more comfortable placing a camera in an Italian restaurant, or a church or club, or a Lower East Side tenement. I was lucky that in the novel all those details about decor and dress and food are there.

You quote in your book that accompanies the film a sentence from the novel: "They all lived in a hieroglyphic world, where the real thing was never said or done or even thought, but only represented by a set of arbitrary signs." Is this why you paid so much ►

◀ attention to period detail in the film – and why you're irritated by all the talk about "obsessive attention to detail", as if this comes from you?

Yes, it's all in the book. What seems to be description is in fact a clear picture of that culture, built up block by block – through every plate and glass and piece of silverware, all the sofas and what's on them. All this wealth of detail creates a wall around Newland Archer, and the longer he stays there, with these things becoming commonplace, the harder it will be for him to move out of that society.

Edith Wharton published the book in 1920, recalling a society that no longer existed after the war. Did you feel that you were showing Americans a period which most of them did not know existed?

Of course. And it was even more sumptuous than we show. I felt the film had to show a modern audience the blocks they put around Newland and people like him. But there's also an irony and a sarcasm in the presentation of that lifestyle – both in the way I tried to do it and in the way Wharton did it in the book. The decor had to become a character for me.

Jay Cocks showed the film to an audience of Wharton specialists which included R.E.B. Lewis, who wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography. And he told me that their reaction was extraordinary, because every time a dinner service was shown or when Mrs Mingott selected the silver plate, they laughed. They knew what the presentation of that particular piece meant. So when the Van der Luydens create a dinner for Countess Olenska, they are making a statement and daring people to go against them.

In the book there's a fantastic build-up to that dinner that tells you just how important the Van der Luydens are and how everyone in New York society acknowledges their status.

I tried to convey that by the attention given to the dinner itself – the centrepiece, the Roman punch – which is like having a triple high mass for a funeral rather than a regular low mass. They are saying, "Not only will we defend you, but we are going to do so on the highest level. If anyone has a problem with that, they are going to have to answer to us."

Just like in 'GoodFellas'...

Exactly. It's a matter of "You have a problem with that? Then you have a problem with me and let's settle it right now." Or in this case, "Oh very well. We're going to have to bring out the Crown Derby, aren't we?" I remember in *The Razor's Edge*, when Gene Tierney throws a plate at Herbert Marshall, he says, "My goodness, the Crown Derby."

It's the heavy artillery.

Absolutely. And the Wharton specialists loved it because they understood better than other people what those signals meant. It was important for me that real goodfellas would like *GoodFellas* and say that it was accurate – and they did. With *The Age of Innocence*, I think that even if ordinary people don't understand fully the significance of the different pieces of china, they will at least see that a lot of pomp and circumstance goes into certain sequences. And as it's not done by me, but by the characters, they get some understanding of the ritual.

Such occasions are the most official way



'A touch of the hand has to suffice for months; the anticipation of a two-hour ride to a train station is so sweet, it's almost overwhelming'



Unconsummated: Archer and Countess Olenska (Michelle Pfeiffer) snatch a moment of intimacy, left; Winona Ryder as May Welland, Archer's young love and future wife, above

they can sign someone on and make them credible in that society. For instance, when Ellen Olenska arrives late at the party given for her, it's not important to her. Next day Newland says, "You know all New York laid themselves at your feet last night." And she answers, "Yes, it was a wonderful party." The audience has to understand that this wasn't just a party, lady! Newland is in effect saying, "I'm getting married to your family, and we have agreed to take on the disgrace of your separation from your husband and we are going to do it with a stiff upper lip. So you really should know what we are doing for you by putting on a party."

There is something about social and professional ritual that fascinates you, whatever the setting or period. But now you seem to feel happier about moving away from your own experience.

One of the lines that led me to make *The Age of Innocence* was my interest in doing different kinds of genre film. I mean, there's a major part of me that says, "Let's do a Western", but it's not that easy. I have to find what's important for me in order to feel comfortable enough to wallow in the making of a film. So although this film deals with New York's 'aristocracy' and a period of New York history that has been neglected, and although it deals with codes and ritual, and with love that's not unrequited but unconsummated – which pretty much covers all the themes I usually deal with – when I read it, I didn't say, "Oh, good – all those themes are here." I was just hit by the impact of the sequence near the end where Newland tries finally to tell his wife May he'd like to leave – and by her response.

It all came together in that scene, and I loved the way I was led by Wharton down the path of Newland's point of view, in which he underestimated all the women, and how he wound up checkmated by them, and how his wife becomes the strongest of them all. I find that admirable. Even though I may not agree with May totally, I like the growth of her character from a young girl to the person who takes control. You see how important her role is in the second opera house scene, which is the first time May has worn her wedding dress since the wedding. We see her seated between her mother and Mrs Van der Luyden – they have passed on the responsibility for continuing their lifestyle to her.

Ironically there seems to be more of you – your own desires and frustrations – in this movie than in some of your other films, even though it comes fully formed from Wharton and is set in such an apparently remote and artificial milieu.

There is. Sometimes when you fall in love you can't see what other people see. You become as passionate and obsessive as Newland, who can't see what's going on around him. That's the theme of *Taxi Driver* and of *Mean Streets* – it's a situation I've found myself in at times, and I've found the way it plays out so wonderful. But then Wharton goes beyond that and makes a case for a life that's not exactly well spent, but a life that happens to him. Newland has his children, then he finds out that his wife knew all along about his love for Ellen and even told his son about it. Basically he is what they call in America a stand-up guy – a man of principles

who would not abandon his wife and children. When he really wanted something most, he gave it up because of his kid.

That's very interesting to me – I don't know if I could do the same. But I do know that there are a lot of people, even today, who would: it's about making a decision in life and sticking to it, making do with what you have. And then, of course, during the conclusion you realise that a generation has gone by. The children don't react in the same way; the First World War is looming ahead and they can't understand why everybody was angry. I don't say it's a happy ending, but it's a realistic and beautiful one. *I think there was a strong emotional reaction at the screening I attended. It was at the Odeon Marble Arch, our biggest screen, and the sensory impact of the film was extraordinary.*

That's great, because the emotional intensity is very important to me. What kept me going as I was reading the book was what a writer friend of mine called "the sweet romantic pain" of the situation, where Newland and Ellen can't consummate their relationship. A touch of the hand has to suffice for months; the anticipation of a two-hour ride to a train station is so sweet, it's almost overwhelming. That was the real reason I wanted to make the film – the idea of that passion which involved such restraint. *A friend and colleague, John Gillett, told me that he thinks this carriage scene is one of the finest he has seen for a long time – and he hates 'GoodFellas'! I think the films are very close: they both try to be truthful to the milieu in which they're set and to make you feel the emotion, the allure, the danger as something almost palpable.*

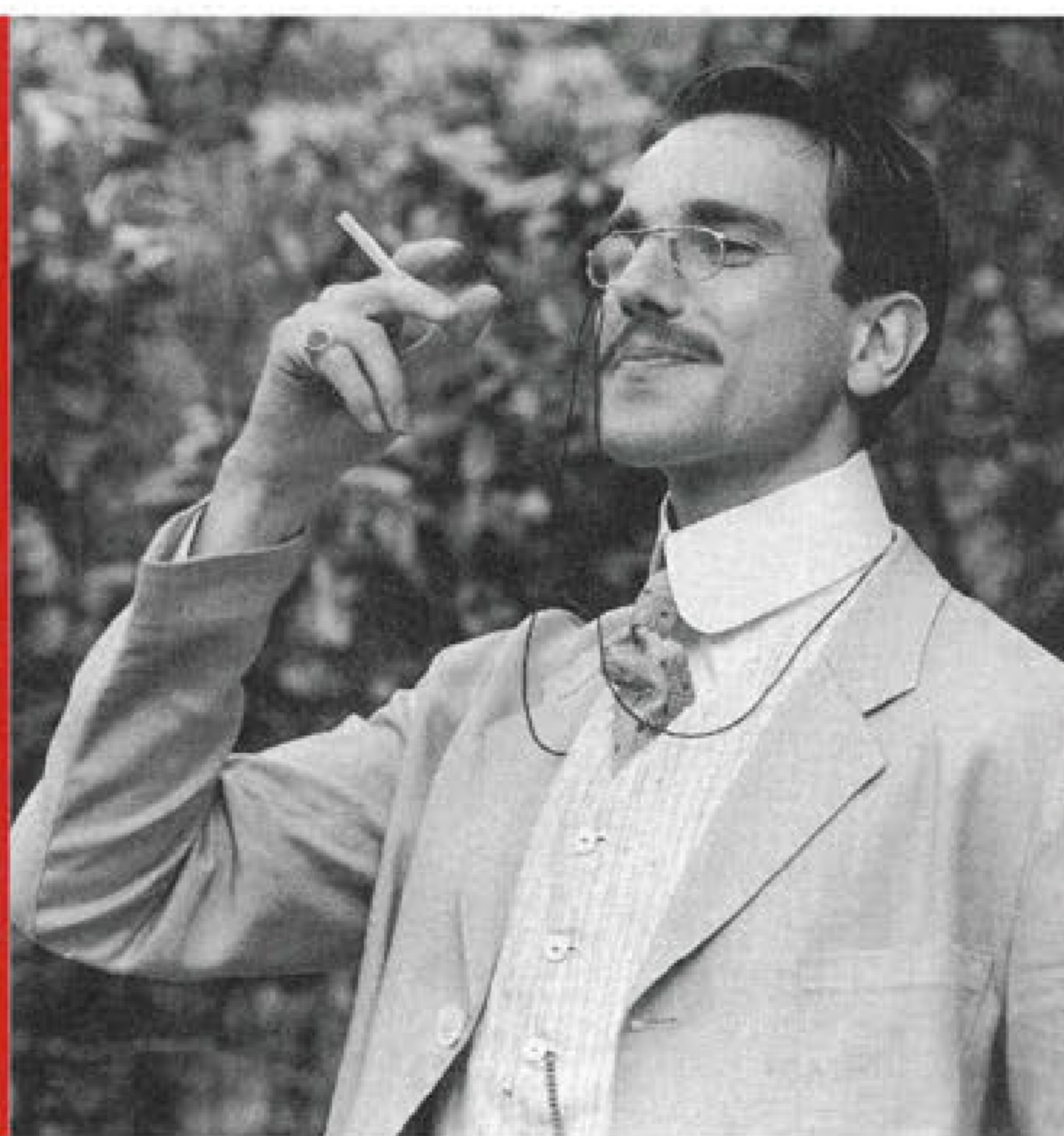
Like drowning in it. Actually there are elements of Rossellini in there, especially *La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV*, because that's where I discovered that the more detail you see, the better you know the people. Other films do that too, but Rossellini did it in a bolder way. In *Louis XIV*, he ties up the entire story in the presentation of a meal. In *The Age of Innocence* we have eight meals, and they are all different in order to make different dramatic points. But although *The Age of Innocence* may look lavish, the editing, the angles, the dissolves and the length of the images were all worked out way in advance to give the impression of extravagance. In fact, it only cost \$32-34 million, and some of the most complicated things, like the beginning of the ball sequence, took only three-quarters of a day. But it was important to achieve the effect of a saturation of detail.

'The Age of Innocence' is a very literary film – deliberately so. But it's not theatrical, except where you bring in theatre and opera as part of the period texture and a dramatic counterpoint to the unspoken story being acted out among the characters.

One of the films that made a strong impression on me as a child was Wyler's *The Heiress*, which, though it's based on Henry James' novel *Washington Square*, was actually taken from a play. I've seen it since and it holds up well, but it is theatrical. The acting is extraordinary – Ralph Richardson, Olivia de Havilland, Montgomery Clift, Miriam Hopkins – but it's still in three acts: the conflicts are all played out in traditional dramaturgy; characters talk in a room and confront each other, all in dialogue. ►

Ghostly parallels

Sylvia Coleridge as Mrs D'Urberville in Polanski's *'Tess'*, right, which though shot largely in France evokes Hardy better than dutiful English efforts; Merchant-Ivory's *'A Room with a View'* gave Daniel Day-Lewis an early period outing, centre; *'La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV'*, far right, Rossellini's magisterial study of pomp and power, and an economical model for Scorsese



◀ There is no narration, no montages, no flashbacks or flashes forward and no visual interpolations such as letters.

I'm trying to get away from this three act approach. Over the last ten years, I've found everyone in Hollywood saying: "The script is good, but we need a new Act Two", or "Act Three just isn't there." Finally I said to a bunch of students: "Why are we using the term 'acts' when the damn thing is a movie?" I like theatre, but theatre is theatre and movies are movies. They should be separate. We should talk about sequences – and there are usually at least five or six sequences rather than three acts – which are broken up into sections and scenes. When I screened a few films for Elia Kazan back in 1992 and we discussed them afterwards, I found that he too was trying to get away from conventional theatrical dramaturgy in *East of Eden* and *Wild River* – neither of which, incidentally, he'd seen since he made them!

I certainly tried to find a different structure for *GoodFellas*, though that was more like a documentary on a lifestyle. For *The Age of Innocence* I wanted to find a way of making something literary – and you know how America is cowed by the tyranny of the word – also filmic. I also wanted a massive use of voiceover because I wanted to give the audience the impression I had while reading the book.

The experience of watching a film is often closer to reading that to watching a play. *The Age of Innocence* made me think of Max Ophuls – the most literary and even theatrical of film-makers, but also the most filmic. It's about creating and manipulating the spectator's point of view, in time through voiceover and in space through those devastating camera movements.

I adore Ophuls and we looked at the new print of *Lola Montès*. But for me, the major Ophuls film was *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. By a happy accident it seemed to be on television practically every afternoon when I was a child – that's the wonderful thing about Ophuls having made four American films – so when I was at home sick from school there would be *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. I couldn't tell at the time about camera moves, but I loved the romance and tragedy of it.

I thought that the way you move the camera so deliberately and eloquently in *'The Age of Innocence'* is like the way Ophuls tracks and cranes, as if you've entered into the characters' emotions and memory.

That's what I was hoping. I'll never forget the

arrival of the piano up the staircase in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. And then the depiction of a whole life in miniature and the sense of romance in the sequence where Louis Jourdan takes Joan Fontaine to the fairground train ride, and the fake backgrounds just slide past them. Ophuls created a world that was unique. Even though I'd seen other films set in Vienna at the turn of the century, they didn't have the grace and truth that Ophuls had in that film, which stood repeated viewing. I used to have a still on my wall in Hollywood of Louis Jourdan at the end, when he decides to go to the duel – that wonderful shot of him at the desk as he's reading the letter.

You have worked with a wide range of collaborators during your career: perhaps only De Niro and Thelma Schoonmaker recur regularly. But even as personnel come and go according to the demands of each film, there is a sense of 'family' about your method of working and a closeness with fellow-creators that you clearly seem to seek. Thelma Schoonmaker has always insisted that the Academy Award she got for the editing of 'Raging Bull' really belongs to you too, since you planned all the incredible distinctions and distortions in that film. I've seen the de luxe new editing suite you have, and I wonder how you work together in it?

That's where the whole creative process happens. I sit in that chair behind her and we have worked out a system of red lights and buzzers to communicate with. It's set up for the way we like to work. Although I'm not in the editors' union, I did make my living as an editor for a while in the 70s, and I feel that working on the script and editing are my strong points, as opposed to understanding camera movement and lighting. I love editing. I love what you can do with a film, where you can cut and not cut. It's Eisenstein really.

The way I work now is that I lay out the editing pattern, and pretty much all the time I decide where to cut and what not to cut. But what Thelma does is to focus on the characters in the film. She'll say, "Maybe we're losing some aspect of so-and-so here. Maybe we should change this performance of this one reading because it might indicate that she's not as sympathetic towards him and we want the audience to realise it at this point."

There's a lot of that kind of editing in *The Age of Innocence*. And in *Raging Bull* some scenes were written but there were also improvisations within the writing. So we would have ten good

takes of Joe Pesci and 12 good takes of De Niro, and we would keep switching them around. "Why don't we use Take 4 again of Joe, because I think we lost something there," she would say. Or, "We lost something on De Niro there so maybe we should try Take 8 again." It has more to do with the spiritual quality of what's happening with the people in the film that she is able to perceive and help balance out for me.

The actual cutting – well, there's pure Eisenstein stuff in *The Age of Innocence*, like when the wife gets up and walks over to him, and you see three cuts of her rising. That's something I can imagine in my head, draw the pictures, and say, "Do this one here, that one there." Then Thelma puts it together and I ask her what she thinks, and often she'll suggest changes.

It took a little longer to edit *The Age of Innocence*, mainly because of the dialogue scenes – trying to work out how long a pause should be. But because there is such an appetite for stories about our business and I had taken between nine and ten months – working with only one editor! – they painted this picture of me as someone "obsessed with detail". But editing is the most important original element of the film-making process, so why short-change it? It's a sorry state of affairs when just doing my job properly is described as "obsessive".

Many people will be surprised to hear that you don't consider yourself a camera and lighting expert when your images are among the most precise and purposeful in contemporary cinema. Since you started working more or less regularly with the German cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, a former colleague of Fassbinder, there has been more tracking and an increased tendency towards formal overhead and big close-up shots, functioning like tableaux and still-lives. You seem to enjoy creating special 'mimetic' shots that encode an emotion or a vital plot point – like the famous experiments in variable camera speed for *'Raging Bull'*. One such in *'The Age of Innocence'* is the opera-glass scan across the Met audience which reveals Countess Olenska to one of Newland's circle, the supercilious Larry Lefferts.

It's such an important move that I felt that just putting a binocular masking over it wasn't enough. Also, it didn't duplicate what you would actually see if you were looking through opera glasses – not that everything has to be literal. But I wanted to give it more of an edge and make it more important when you finally see Ellen slipping into the box, so Michael and

Stefan (Louis Jourdan) reaches the end of Lisa's harrowing letter, the story of her life lived only for him in Ophüls' 'Letter from an Unknown Woman', right; in 'Letter', the playboy pianist's single night of love with Lisa (Joan Fontaine) is given unforgettable poignancy by their visit to a fairground train attraction, centre top; Ralph Richardson as Dr Sloper laying down the law in Wyler's 'The Heiress', centre bottom; Olivia de Havilland, as Catherine Sloper, climbs the stairs to her spinster bed in 'The Heiress', far right



I devised a kind of stop-action photography where we took just one frame at a time and panned. Then we realised that this was going to be too fast, so we decided to print each frame three times. However, this was still too choppy for me, so just when we were finishing negative cutting I finally decided to dissolve between each set of three frames. It took quite a lot of work, going back to the lab countless times – as Thelma can tell you.

Rock and classic American pop have played such a memorable part in your films from the start that you're not usually associated with the 'symphonic' tradition of Hollywood music – unlike De Palma and Spielberg. But using Bernard Herrmann for 'Taxi Driver' was a deliberate homage – and after two collaborations with Elmer Bernstein it looks as though you have now been able to sign up fully to a tradition you admire. 'Cape Fear' had Bernstein reworking Herrmann's music for the original film, of course, and Bernstein also did the score for 'The Age of Innocence'. Using Bernstein is a matter of embracing the Hollywood tradition, and *The Age of Innocence* is the closest to a traditional Hollywood score I have ever worked with. I could have gone classical and scored the picture with period music in the way I had used popular music before, but I wanted to go the other way. It wasn't so much nostalgia for the sound of all those romantic films as a remembrance of the skill and artistry that used to be available – and still is with someone of Bernstein's stature.

Another link with the Hollywood past is Saul Bass, creator of a range of now classic title sequences which became indelibly linked with the image of the films they prefaced.

For me Bass is one of the key figures in American movies. His title sequences don't just capture the spirit of the movie you are about to see – in some cases they are better than the movie itself! He created a style and energy that give you a lift, prepare you for the picture and make you want to see what is going to happen over the next two hours. And they don't feel separate from the movie, they really seem part of it.

I didn't know that he was still working until I saw *The War of the Roses* with his credit at the end. I thought the titles for that were simple and interesting. At the time I was having a problem putting in the word 'Goodfellas' where I wanted it, because it was incorporated in the action. When he slams down the trunk and says "I want to be a gangster", the lettering

never seemed quite right. So I said, "The only man who can really work this out is a guy named Saul Bass." He did – and then we kept him on to do *Cape Fear*.

How did you actually work with Bass and his wife Elaine on 'The Age of Innocence'?

We just sent them a tape of the first 40 minutes that were edited. The opera sequence made it very clear in his mind what he wanted to do: opening on flowers and keeping text (which is from a book of etiquette of that period) superimposed over the images. And it was their idea to cut to the *Faust* overture.

Working with Bernstein, Bass, and with Freddie Francis as cinematographer on 'Cape Fear' isn't only because you admire these great names from the past – it's more like making a bridge between your own work and the period in which they gained their reputation. Exactly. Very often today you hear the phrase that someone has "been round the block a lot" if they are over 70. My view is that maybe we should listen to what they have to say because they have more experience to bring to what we need. When I first worked with Saul and Elaine Bass on *GoodFellas* I saw right away that they hadn't lost any of what they had.

You are currently making a documentary about the history of American cinema for the BFI/Channel 4 series '100 Years of Cinema'. And of course you have been an active campaigner for film preservation and have a personal collection of an enviable scale and eclecticism. From my own recent viewing of very early American films, I realised that there is a near quotation in 'The Age of Innocence' when, in one of the rare exteriors, we see a striking image of a crowded street full of men clutching their hats against the wind.

Yes, that comes from one of the films I saw through the Library of Congress. It's a 1903 film called *At the Foot of the Flatiron*, and it shows all those people bunched up on the sidewalk because no one wanted to walk on the street. This was a place that was always windy – before the rest of the skyscrapers were built the wind could blow right across the island. I also saw *What Happened on 23rd Street* and a lot of other early New York films. And what about that documentary from the first decade of the century you have in the BFI's *Early Russian Cinema* anthology – *The Fish Factory in Astrakan*? Those glimpses at the camera are really something. 'What Happened on 23rd Street' – where the woman's skirt is blown up as she walks over a subway ventilation grid – is a forerunner of the famous gag from 'The

Seven Year Itch' with Marilyn Monroe. And the Flatiron intersection was also popular as a good place to see the wind reveal women's ankles.

How do you see your new role as a practical cinema historian and cheerleader for the centenary?

We don't have the luxury of the 13-hour Kevin Brownlow-David Gill *Hollywood* series – which I think is quintessential – so this is just one aspect of a journey that I could take through American movies. It's like a little museum: I say we'll stop at this display and another display, then maybe we'll pass up two others and go on to that one later. But it's difficult because there are so many things to show. For instance, I can't let this clip from *Force of Evil* play, because I have to keep it moving and make the points I want to make. The programme is subtitled *A personal journey through the movies*, and I'm trying to direct it towards an audience of younger filmmakers and students who may not be aware of certain kinds of pictures or of trends in American movies that interest me a great deal.

You are obviously getting a lot out of the process. It seems like a real outlet for all the enthusiasm and knowledge you have accumulated.

Absolutely. I hope that we can go on to do one on French and one on Italian cinema, just for America, and perhaps one on Britain too. These might actually be easier because there isn't the same pressure to cover everything.

Do you have any hopes for the centenary of cinema being a major cultural event, or do you think it will just be of interest to movie buffs?

I think it's going to be something very special – the only problem is that the Americans, the French and the British can't agree on which year! Nor can they agree on who invented it – which shouldn't even be in discussion since it's so obvious that it was a simultaneous invention, although Edison did try to take all the credit. Now it's clear that the Lumières and Friese-Greene and others were important too. I'm still hoping that Cinémemoire will do something major to celebrate the centennial.

And speaking of cultural difference, just tell all those people that *The Age of Innocence* is really not so extravagant. It's not as easy for Americans to make a film like that with real locations as it is for you here in England.

'The Age of Innocence' opens on 28 January and is reviewed on page 45 of this issue. Scorsese is currently developing 'Casino', a story about the height of organised crime in Las Vegas, and its undoing

From Preminger's 'The Man with the Golden Arm' to Scorsese's recent work, the name Bass is synonymous with major title and credit design. Pat Kirkham talks with Saul and Elaine Bass

LOOKING FOR THE SIMPLE IDEA

● The work of Saul Bass heralded a revolution in film title and credit sequence design. The most famous designer of such sequences in the history of Hollywood, he stamped his characteristic style on the opening of films – as well as on posters, press books and logos – for a dozen or so years from 1954, the year in which he animated the advertising symbol he had created for Otto Preminger's *Carmen Jones*. Bass, who working together with his wife Elaine has recently returned to title design, not only brought a visual unity to film advertising and promotion, but also radically altered the role of titles and credits, making them an integral part of the film and using them to establish mood and audience engagement from the opening frames.

A graphic designer born and trained in New York (under Howard Trafton at the Art Students League and Gyorgy Kepes at Brooklyn College), Bass moved to Los Angeles just after the Second World War to work on movie advertising. He progressed from still graphic symbols for films (over 60 to date) to moving graphics for title sequences and then to live-action ones. As well as credit titles which symbolise or summarise the film to come, he developed the credit sequence as a prologue dealing with the time before the story begins – as in *Nine Hours to Rama* (1962) – or as an epilogue which recapitulates what has just been seen, as in *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956). Bass worked with some of the industry's most creative directors – including Preminger, Hitchcock and Billy Wilder, whom he describes as “my masters – I learned from them as I worked.” Among his more memorable titles (over 40 to date) are *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), *Bonjour Tristesse* (1957), *Vertigo* (1958), *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), *Psycho* (1960), *Walk on the Wild Side* (1962) and *Seconds* (1966).

Immersing himself in what he describes as “miniature film-making”, Bass learned quickly and soon became involved with directing sequences within films, including the shower scene in *Psycho*, the racing sequences in *Grand Prix* and the final battle sequence in *Spartacus*. From there it was but a short step to making

films himself: “I got tired of beginnings and middles and wanted to make something that had a beginning, a middle and an end.”

Bass' title sequences reformed the way films were viewed, playing a major part in ending ‘popcorn time’ – a period of eating or chatting until the film ‘proper’ started. Opera audiences listen intently to the overture, and Bass set out to get the same attention for his credits. In many US cinemas credits were played over the curtains that covered the screen – a practice Bass and Preminger were determined to end.

“I felt sorry for those poor guys who had worked their asses off making credits. Here was their work rippling over the huge drapes while the projectionist waited for what to them was the dramatic moment – the fade-in of the first scene. Then, and only then, did they pull back the curtain. When Otto learned that his *The Man with the Golden Arm* was opening over closed drapes he made sure that there was a note attached to every print instructing the projectionist not to run the first reel until the curtains had been drawn back.”

Bass aimed “to symbolise and summarise” a whole movie in a few minutes. It was not that no one had tried to do this before, but rather that it was not high on the agenda of Hollywood film-makers of the early 50s. In the pre-sound era, especially as films grew in length, some directors had taken a great deal of care to establish mood in opening sequences and to ensure that viewers knew the broad sweep of what followed. D. W. Griffith's spectacular prologue for *Intolerance* (1916) is a fine example, as is *Broken Blossoms* (1919), where the mood is set by a few written sentences and the romantic yet foreboding music. (When he was researching old movie titles for *That's Entertainment Part II* in the mid-70s, Bass was somewhat disappointed by their general lack of invention and so created what he calls a “mythical history of stuff I thought should have been there – or which I would have liked to have been there.”) In the post-Second World War period, however, titles

and credits were usually simply rolled over a static background, or if moving images were used, then these were largely representational.

Bass' more abstract and minimalist style signalled modernity. The 50s saw the widespread acceptance of modernism in many aspects of culture in the US – from architecture to advertising and furniture to fabric design – and Bass' images were part of a popular embrace of the aesthetics of reduction and fragmentation. His corporate and film images were – and still are – distinguished by his ability to alight upon the essence of a topic and express it in a minimalist way that nonetheless has maximum impact.

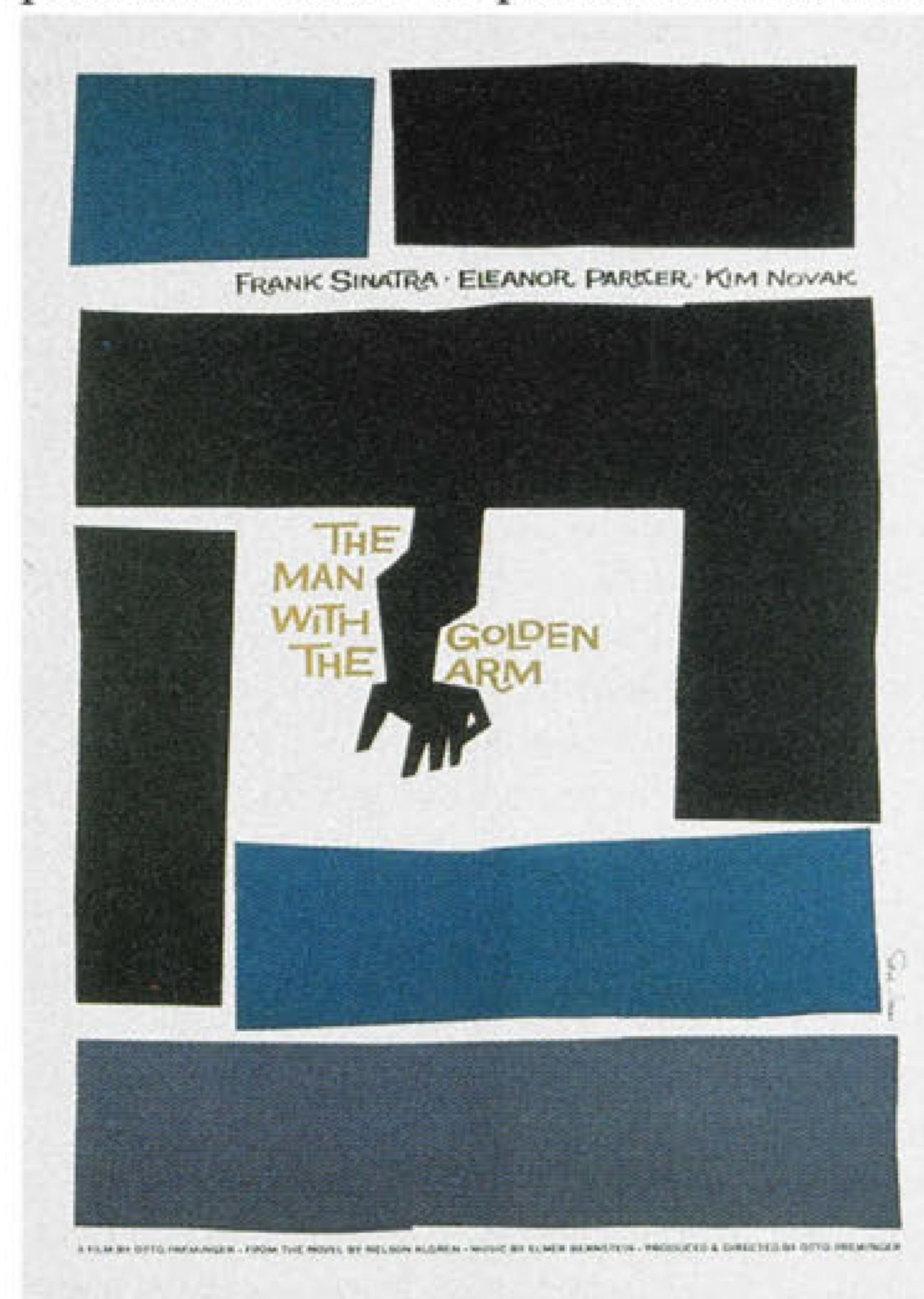
Making it move

When Preminger first suggested to Bass the use of the film's abstract advertising symbol at the beginning of *The Man with the Golden Arm*, he envisaged it as a static logo and did not warm to Bass' idea of making it move. “We argued about it. In true Hollywood style, I had a fangs-bared fight with Otto, who was an infuriating but brilliant client.” Ironically, just when Bass had calmed down, decided he could do something really good with still images and that Preminger was probably right after all, the latter telephoned to give him the go-ahead. Thereupon ensued another “very strong difference of opinion”, during which Bass was won back to his original position. When the first jazz score was added to his minimalist sequence, the image of modernity was complete. Nearly 40 years on, it is important to remember how very different that opening looked and sounded from what had gone before.

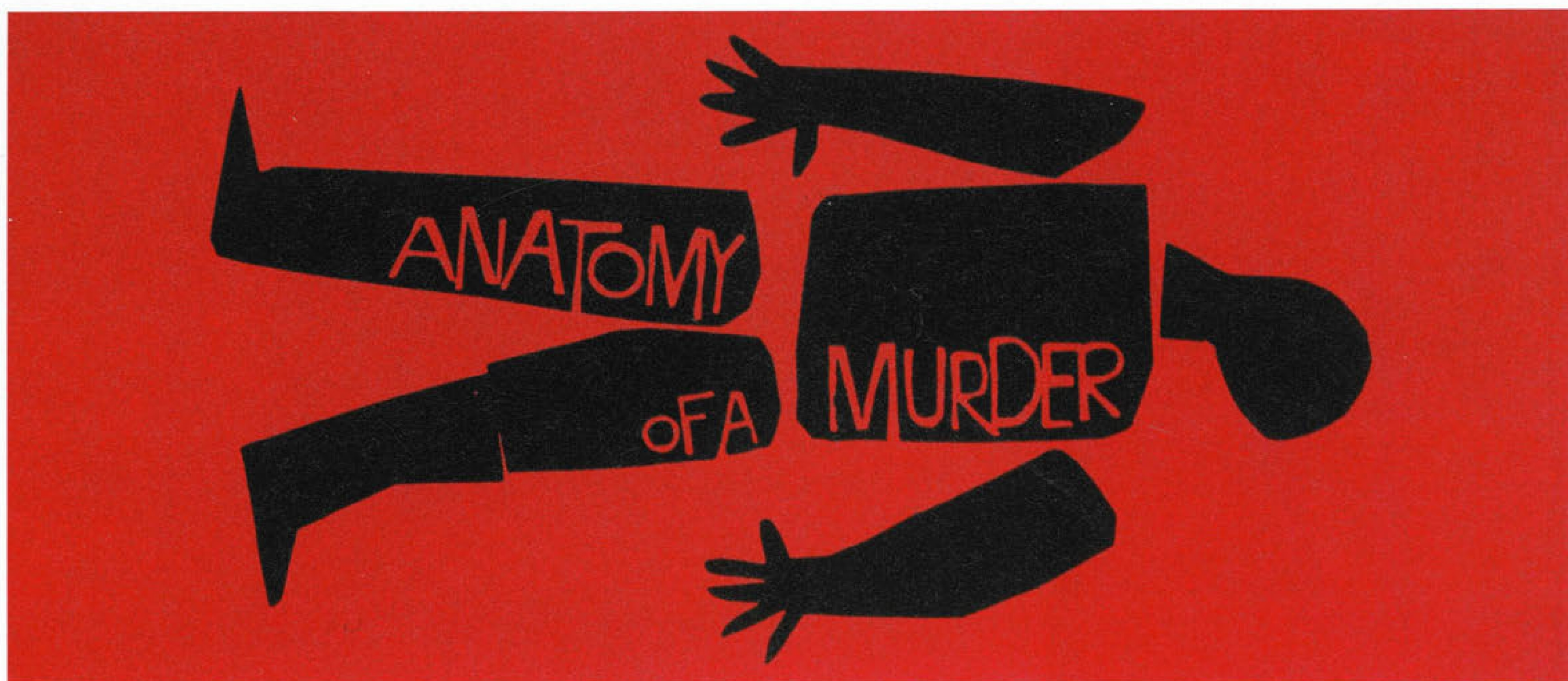
From the mid-50s Bass enjoyed an international reputation as the best there was – a Hollywood success story that it was agreed couldn't have happened to a nicer, more generous or hard-working guy. But from the mid to late 60s came a gap of about 20 years – “fade out”, as he jokingly describes it. There were two main reasons for this. “It wasn't just that my type of titles became the thing to do – almost an industry in itself – but also the fact that producers, film-makers and title-makers began to regard the titles as a personal tap dance that they did before the film began. All sorts of showing off went on. Elaine [his wife and collaborator] and I feel we are there to serve the film and to approach the task with a sense of responsibility. I find it disturbing to see titles that I regard as fashionable, idiosyncratic performances or novelty for novelty's sake. We saw a lot of pyrotechnics and fun and games which didn't necessarily support the film. I suppose I lost interest – and then we were also getting more involved with our own film-making projects.”

From the late 60s Bass was less sought after as cheaper imitators and more ‘fashionable’ designers took up the work. And in a sense, Bass' invention had made him redundant, since once integrated title sequences were accepted, there was a certain logic to the idea of film-makers producing their own. Today, directors such as Quentin Tarantino, although an admirer of Bass, could not imagine foregoing control over the opening of a film to the degree that Scorsese has recently done.

But despite the lack of new work, Bass' fans



Modern and minimal: Saul Bass' revolutionary design for Otto Preminger's 'The Man with the Golden Arm'



increased, particularly among younger filmmakers and designers addicted to 'old' movies. Japanese fashion designers Issey Miyake and Eiko Ishioka (Oscar-winning costume designer for Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*) recently told him his work had inspired them to become designers, while it was two fans – James Brooks and Martin Scorsese – who were responsible for his 'comeback' with commissions for the title sequences for *Cape Fear*, *The War of the Roses* and *The Age of Innocence*, among others.

A creative partnership

Bass' wife, Elaine Makatura, has been working with him since the 60s. Largely self-taught, she worked in a design studio in New York before moving to Los Angeles to work as a designer at Capitol Records. In the late 50s she joined Saul Bass Associates, the design firm Saul established in the early 50s. Although he has the higher public profile and larger reputation, theirs is a very close collaboration and her role deserves to be more widely recognised.

It is notoriously difficult to unravel individual input into particular projects in any collaboration, let alone that of a husband and wife living and working together. Saul is definitely the public front of the partnership: his is the more outgoing personality and he is an impressive and entertaining public speaker. But dislike of the public arena and modesty should not be taken to mean lack of creative input. Elaine draws extraordinarily well, has a remarkable sense of the appropriateness of the image vis-à-vis the text and a sensibility to music that played a not unimportant part in the decision to cut the opening of *The Age of Innocence* to *Faust*. No one is clearer about her importance to their joint work than Saul Bass himself, who claims that hers is the only judgment he trusts – something of crucial importance in a business where the results of individual aesthetic decisions can often not be seen until it is too late to change them.

It is surprising how often the testimony of the male partner as to the creativity of the woman is ignored by critics and historians blinkered by notions of male genius. It was

common in the design world in post-war America for the male partner to have the higher public profile and this was compounded in the case of the Bases, as it was with Charles and Ray Eames, by the fact that the male partner already had an established reputation by the time they began working together.

Though the Bases produced little in the way of title and credit sequences in the late 60s and 70s, the 'missing years' were extremely creative ones in other aspects of film-making and graphic design. One of the US's most respected graphic design firms, Saul Bass & Associates (since 1978 Bass/Yager & Associates) has produced logos and corporate identities for United Airlines, Continental Airlines, Warner Communications, Rockwell International, AT&T, Quaker, Celanese and Alcoa, as well as companies in Japan including Minolta, Kose (a cosmetics company) and Ajinomoto (the General Foods of Japan). Other work included packaging and posters as well as commercials and short films, and in 1974 Saul Bass directed *Phase IV*, a feature film for Paramount which he describes as "an interesting but not entirely successful film, though as a life experience it was absolutely extraordinary – rather like walking on a high wire without much training."

The short films made by Elaine and Saul include the Academy Award-winning *Why Man Creates* (1968, for Kaiser Aluminum); *The Searching Eye* (1964 for Eastman-Kodak); *From Here to There* (1964 for United Airlines); Academy Award-nominated *Notes on the Popular Arts* (1977, for Warner Communications); *The Solar Film* (1981, underwritten by Warner Communications under Robert Redford's umbrella as executive producer); and *Quest* (1983, for a Japanese cultural association). Despite some critical acclaim at the time, they remain relatively unknown and deserve greater recognition.

Marty just called

When I asked Saul Bass if he was pleased to be working on title sequences again, his yes was emphatic. He added: "The return came out of the blue about six years ago when a number of directors became interested in us again. We got

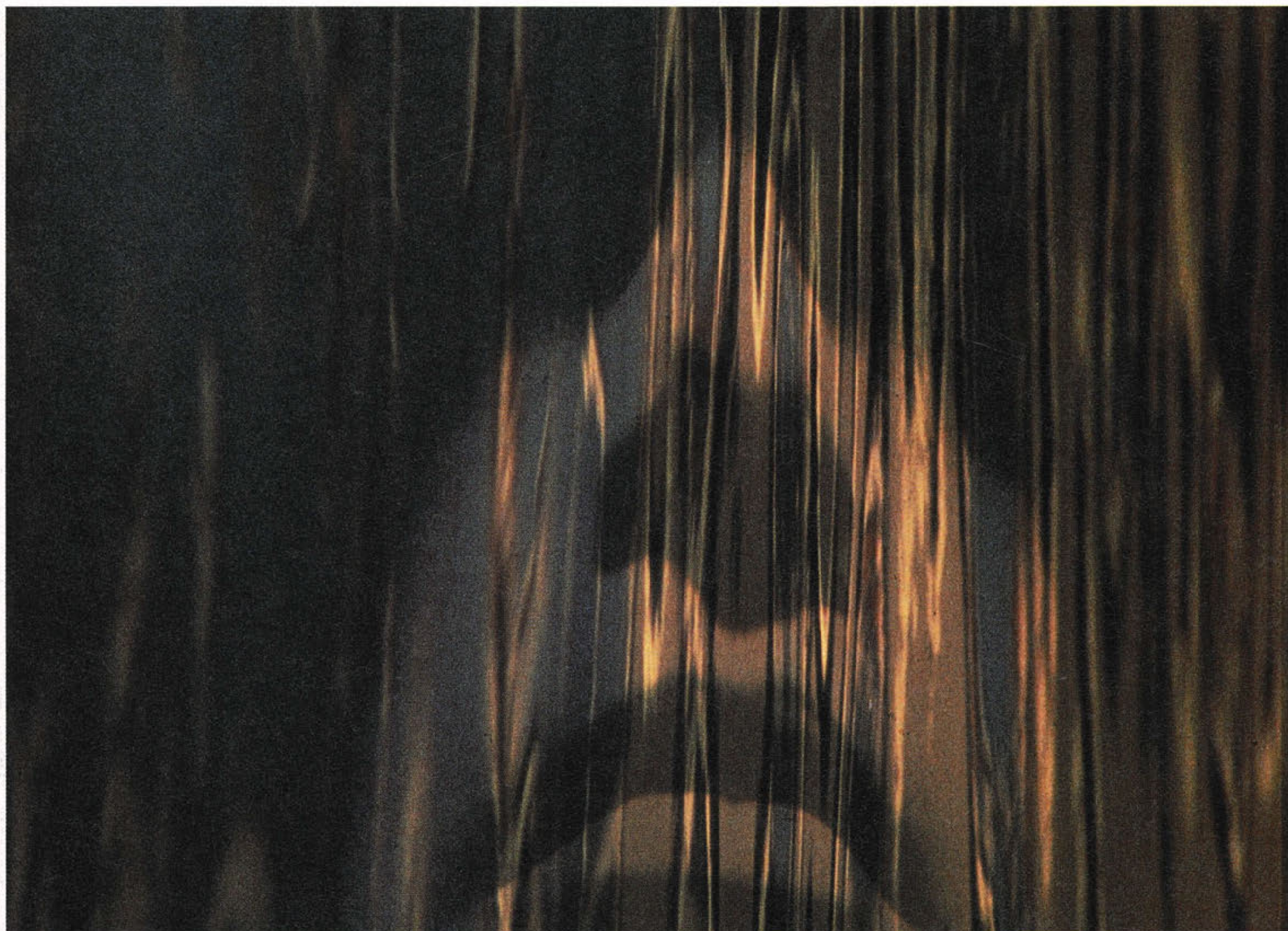
Putting it together: Bass' design for Preminger's 'Anatomy of a Murder' – a characteristically abstracted and powerful image

a call from Jim Brooks, who turned out to be a fan, and in 1987 Elaine and I did the titles for *Broadcast News* and then some for Penny Marshall's *Big*, which Brooks co-produced, as he did Danny DeVito's *The War of the Roses*. It was as simple as being asked. None of these titles was terribly ambitious, but they were interesting. Frankly, the main and greatest interest was working with Jim."

It was at this stage that Scorsese became involved. He was working on the title sequence for *GoodFellas*, but having decided where the titles should go he could neither resolve the typography nor achieve the impact he wanted. He went to see *The War of the Roses*, and the opening sequence, together with his knowledge of Bass' early work, convinced him that the man he describes as "one of the great American artists" could give him the titles he wanted. He persuaded his producer and after only one or two attempts the Bases came up with the titles finally used. From that point on Scorsese knew that he wanted to work with no one else.

The Bases were delighted: "Marty just called and asked, 'Are you still interested in doing titles?' And would we be interested in working with him? You bet your ass we were. The great thing about titles is that you can do a discrete piece of film work in a couple of concentrated months. It is both creatively demanding and satisfying, and you don't take a year and a half or two years out of your life, as with a major feature. There is something very appealing about being able to complete the work in a relatively brief space of time. They need tight editing, but of all the processes of film-making, I love editing because it's a ritualistic process over which you have complete control. It's just me and Elaine and another person sitting in a room – endlessly, it's true – calmly, slowly and methodically sorting it out."

While there is no one style to a Bass title/credit sequences – whether produced by Saul in the 50s and 60s or made with Elaine more recently – there are recurrent motifs and images. These include off-set lettering (*Psycho* ►



'Cape Fear'

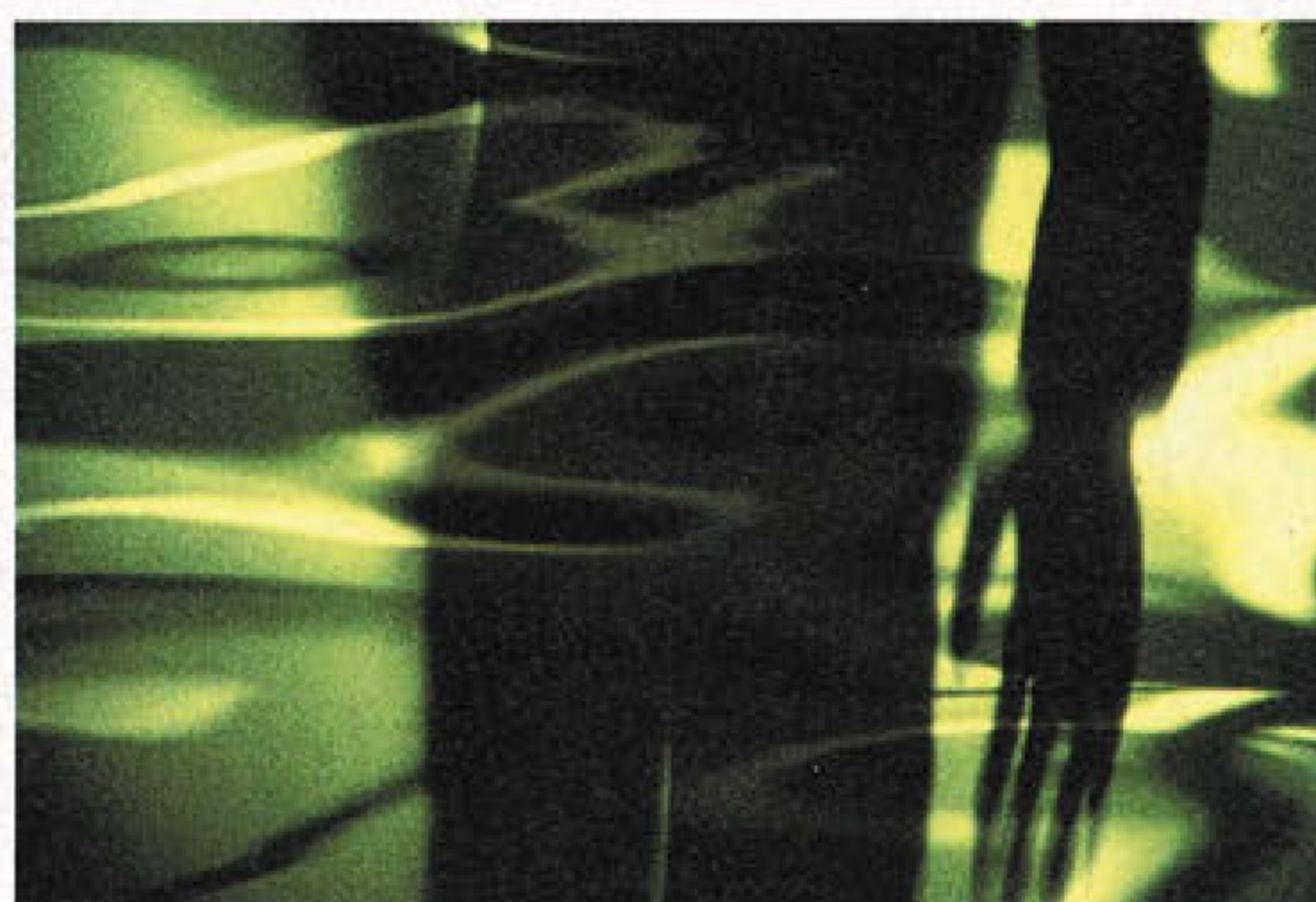
Elaine and Saul Bass: "Our concept for the film was based on the notion of submerged emotions – the black potentials of the psyche. The spine of the concept was water. The entire title consists of water, and the water changes: it becomes more and more

abstract until what you see are flickering reflections. The greens, golds and blues change and finally it becomes red. The water becomes blood. It is a powerful colour and we carried it over into Marty's opening shot of Juliette Lewis' eyes. It was a perfect

piece of continuity flowing out of our use of distorted eyes under the reflections early in the title. Then we began to introduce other images that added levels of unease and uncertainty. Using simple optical devices, we put the images under water and

distorted them. Eventually the water becomes an emotional whiplash of form and colour with disturbing emotional undercurrents. We hoped this process would escalate the sense of threat so that when you first see De Niro, his tattoos become more than strange – they

become quite terrifying. The sequence was intended to give a very simple signal of dysfunction. We did this by cutting the letterforms in half horizontally and offsetting them. It was a simple reinforcement of the implications of the live action."





'The Age of Innocence'

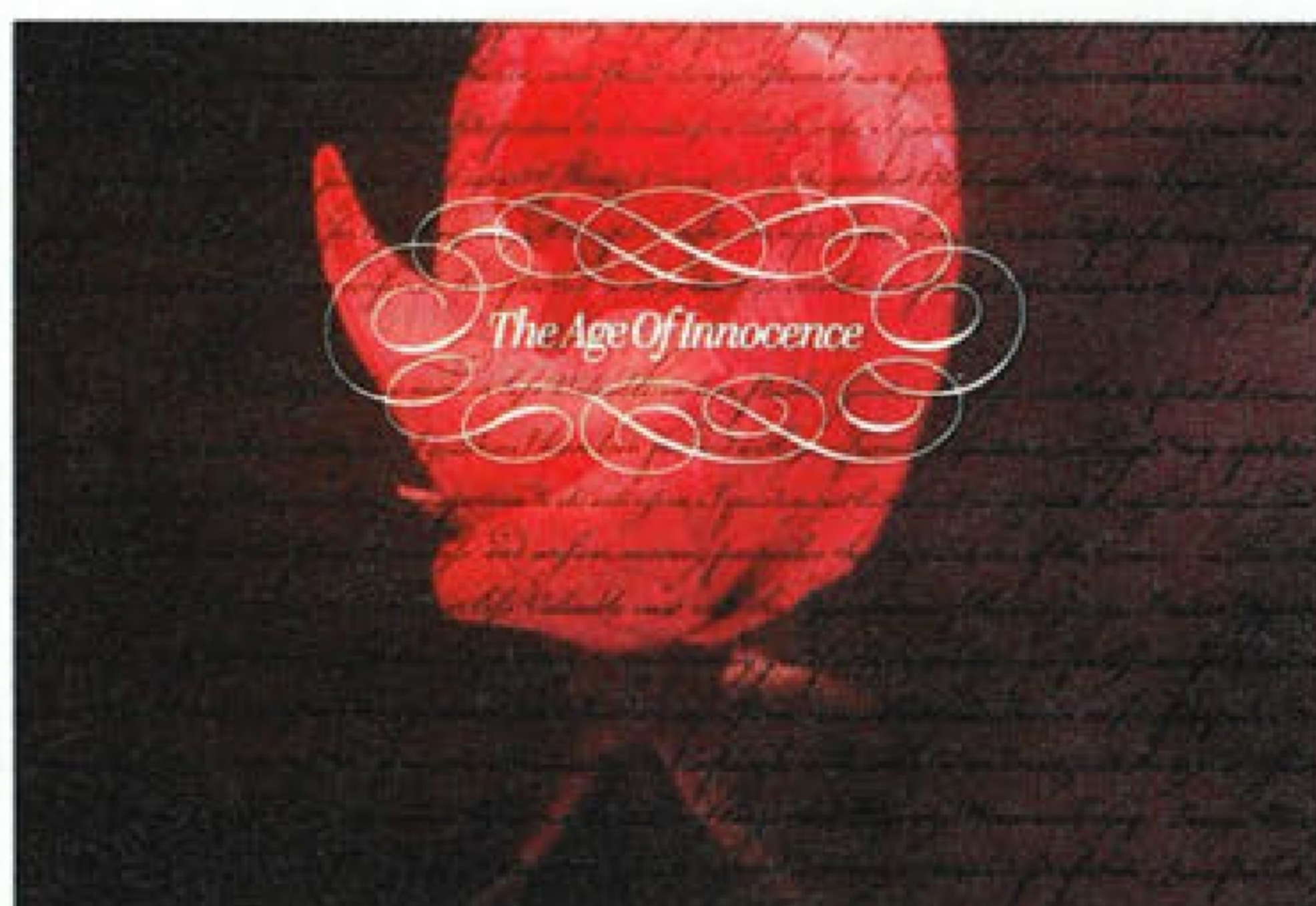
"The title was deliberately ambiguous and metaphorical. The kinds of notions we had in mind involved an attempt to project the romantic aura of the period and still signal its submerged sensuality and hidden codes. The concept consists of

a series of metaphorical layers. One layer is of lush time-lapse blossoming flowers evoking the romanticism of the Victorian period. Each starts as a closed bud, and slowly and inexorably explodes to fill the screen. The continuous series of long dissolves from

flower to flower creates a sensuous overlay to the notion of Victorian innocence. The first flowers blossom slowly, sedately. As the dissolves progress, the tempo increases, resolving into an intense compressed montage of flower openings. To achieve this we optically

double and triple-framed already highly over-cranked footage and framed the flowers very tightly. The superimposed lace patterns are another layer. When the flowers are closed the lace is barely perceptible. But when the flowers open and fill the

screen, the lace textures are fully revealed and become the filter through which we view the flowers. Another layer was the patterns of Victorian calligraphy to augment the Victorian character and suggest the film's literary origin in Wharton's novel."



◀ and *Cape Fear*); animated thin lines in black and white (*The Man with the Golden Arm*); fragmentation (*Anatomy of a Murder* and *Spartacus*); subtle and changing washes of colour (*West Side Story*); mouths, ears and other parts of the human face (*Spartacus* and *Seconds*); beautifully observed detail (*Nine Hours to Rama* and *Mr Saturday Night*) and the layering of script over image (*Spartacus* and *The Age of Innocence*). In terms of colour, the Besses' work has been distinguished by their use of black, which has often been contrasted with white or the two used with red. But other sequences reveal their capacity to use a wide range of colour and colour changes. There are other deceptively simple delights in their work – the tearing away of a piece of paper to reveal credits underneath (*Bunny Lake is Missing*); the use of graffiti to carry the end credits (*West Side Story*); the play on the eye in *Vertigo*; the convergence of single lines into a solid which then transforms to a jagged arm (*The Man with the Golden Arm*); the use of a wild cat in *Walk on the Wild Side* and the lace over the rose in *The Age of Innocence*.

For Saul Bass, simplicity has always been the aim – whether in his early work or in the Besses' collaboration with Scorsese: "In the final analysis, content is the key and I've always looked for the simple idea. That is what I did in the 50s and that is what Elaine and I do now. We have a very reductive point of view when it comes to visual matters. We see the challenge as getting the concept down to something totally simple, and yet doing something with it which provokes; to achieve a simplicity which also has a certain ambiguity and a certain metaphysical implication that make that simplicity vital. If it is simple *simple*, it's boring. We try for the idea that is so simple that it will make you think – and rethink. What we do is reach for some way to make people sit up and pay attention to what we want to say. It's a risky business: we're improvising and never know if it will work out – you don't know if your gut feelings will prove right or wrong."

"With *Cape Fear* we were involved from the beginning, whereas with *The Age of Innocence* we only became actively involved as they finished shooting. With *Cape Fear* we knew the original film and we knew that Marty would *noir* it – we didn't know how, but we sure as hell knew he would give it an edge. We had read the script, but we were much more interested in his approach, in what he was going for. After we'd talked it over with him we worked around a notion of the monsters of the deep and developed a few ideas – some little more than scribbles – together with some storyboards to show him. These were random images, not proper sequences, but even though we were a little vague on the details of the visual explication, we were very clear about our ideas.

"It was at this stage that he gave us the go-ahead. I have to say that he was extremely trusting – remarkably so considering how little he had seen. We were both gratified and panicked by that: gratified at the trust and panicked at the thought of having to live up to it, especially since we knew only too well that anything can happen when discrete images are placed into time frames and sequences of events. After that

Saul Bass: feature credits



1954

● **Carmen Jones** (d: Otto Preminger)

1955

● **The Racers** (British title: **Such Men Are Dangerous**) (d: Henry Hathaway)

● **The Shrike** (d: José Ferrer)

● **The Seven Year Itch** (d: Billy Wilder)

● **The Big Knife** (d: Robert Aldrich)

● **The Man with the Golden Arm** (d: Otto Preminger)

1956

● **Storm Center** (d: Daniel Taradash)

● **Attack** (d: Robert Aldrich)

● **Around the World in Eighty Days**

(d: Michael Anderson)

● **Edge of the City** (British title:

A Man is Ten Feet Tall) (d: Martin Ritt)

1957

● **The Young Stranger**

(d: John Frankenheimer)

● **Saint Joan** (d: Otto Preminger)

● **The Pride and the Passion**

(d: Stanley Kramer)

1958

● **Bonjour Tristesse**

(d: Otto Preminger)

● **Cowboy** (d: Delmer Daves)

● **Vertigo** (d: Alfred Hitchcock)

● **The Big Country** (d: William Wyler)

1959

● **North by Northwest**

(d: Alfred Hitchcock)

● **Anatomy of a Murder**

(d: Otto Preminger)

1960

● **Psycho** (d: Alfred Hitchcock)

also pictorial consultant

● **Ocean's Eleven** (d: Lewis Milestone)

● **Spartacus** (d: Stanley Kubrick)

also visual consultant

● **Exodus** (d: Otto Preminger)

● **The Facts of Life** (d: Melvin Frank)

1961

● **West Side Story**

(d: Robert Wise/Jerome Robbins)

also visual consultant

● **Something Wild** (d: Jack Garfein)

1962

● **Walk on the Wild Side**

(d: Edward Dmytryk)

● **Advise and Consent**

(d: Otto Preminger)

● **Nine Hours to Rama**

(d: Mark Robson)

1963

● **It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World**

(d: Stanley Kramer)

● **The Cardinal** (d: Otto Preminger)

● **The Victors** (d: Carl Foreman)

prologue and titles

1965

● **In Harm's Way** (d: Otto Preminger)

● **Bunny Lake is Missing**

(d: Otto Preminger)

1966

● **Seconds** (d: John Frankenheimer)

● **Not With My Wife, You Don't!**

(d: Norman Panama)

also visual consultant

● **Grand Prix** (d: John Frankenheimer)

also visual consultant/montages

1971

● **Such Good Friends** (d: Otto Preminger)

1973

● **Phase IV** (d: Saul Bass)

1974

● **Rosebud** (d: Otto Preminger)

1976

● **That's Entertainment Part II**

(new sequences d: Gene Kelly)

1979

● **The Human Factor** (d: Otto Preminger)

Elaine and Saul Bass: feature credits

1987

● **Broadcast News** (d: James Brooks)

1988

● **Big** (d: Penny Marshall)

1989

● **The War of the Roses**

(d: Danny DeVito)

1990

● **GoodFellas** (d: Martin Scorsese)

1991

● **Cape Fear** (d: Martin Scorsese)

1992

● **Mr Saturday Night** (d: Billy Crystal)

1993

● **The Age of Innocence**

(d: Martin Scorsese)

Compiled in collaboration

with Saul and Elaine Bass

he didn't see it again until it was finished. That was very nerve-racking, especially since we had run out of time and money by then, but in the end he was extremely pleased."

When it came to *The Age of Innocence*, Scorsese again showed a great deal of trust. He gave the Besses no brief, but simply showed them some scenes on video and then, later, the entire film. He insists that the idea came totally from Elaine and Saul. Their concept was for an ambiguous and metaphorical sequence in which blossoming flowers were overlaid with lace and script from a late nineteenth-century book on etiquette. The Besses took a mock-up to New York, which they discussed with Scorsese, picture by picture. He told them of his delight with certain aspects and anxieties about others and they went back to Los Angeles to create the sensuous opening which Scorsese feels captures both the beauty and unease he had hoped for, as well as the very delicate relationship between the two.

A rose is a rose

Commenting on the difference between the lush credits of *The Age of Innocence* and the minimalism of some of their early work, Elaine and Saul Bass point out that: "There are some films for which the proper expression is minimalist and for others it needs to be more layered and complex. This is *not* a function of a stylistic point of view. Some of the early animated work was semi-abstract; partly because it was animation, but also because that style related to the content. It is interesting that Marty considers *The Age of Innocence* sequence to be at times abstract. In general, we have a reductionist

point of view, and despite the lush quality of *The Age of Innocence* sequence, it is based on a very simple idea – a rose is a rose, is a rose; a flower is a flower, is a flower – expressed in a ritually layered way. The images are so closely examined that they become almost abstract; you begin to lose the reality in the pattern and the movement."

"For *Cape Fear*, the music was created separately. For the film itself, Elmer Bernstein did a re-arrangement of the original Bernard Herrmann score, but for our sequence he created an entirely new piece, though one in the spirit of the original. For me it was a wonderful renewal of an old working relationship, because it was Bernstein who scored *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Work was going ahead on our sequence and the music at the same time, as is usually the case. There wasn't time for him to wait until we had finished. As it was, we didn't have everything resolved when we met with Elmer, but we showed him what we had so he could get the sense of it, and we discussed timings. We knew by now that certain things were going to happen, and, most importantly for Elmer, *when* they were going to happen, even if we didn't know exactly *how* they would happen. It was what you might call a 'rough', but with everything in place so that he could construct his score in relation to the imagery."

With *The Age of Innocence*, the process could not have been more different. The Besses decided to cut the sequence to the overture to *Faust*, and as Scorsese says, "it seemed to work so well that Elmer and I left it that way" – a valued and valuable tribute from a director who knows and wants quality.

LAURENS GEELS AND DICK MAAS
PRESENT
A FILM BY
ALEX VAN WARMERDAM

THE NORTHERNERS

15

(ENGLISH
SUB-TITLES)

STARRING

LEONARD JACK ANNET
LUCIEER WOUTERSE MALHERBE

RUDOLF LOES
LUCIEER WOUTERSON

ALEX VEERLE
VAN WARMERDAM DOBBELAERE

JACQUES THEO DARY
COMMANDEUR VAN GOGH SOMÉ

PRODUCED BY LAURENS GEELS AND DICK MAAS
DIRECTED BY ALEX VAN WARMERDAM
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: MARC VAN WARMERDAM
SCRIPT: ALLARD BEKKER
COSTUME DESIGNER: MARC FELPERLAAN

EDITOR: RENE WIEGMANS
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: RIKKE JELIER
COSTUME DESIGNER: ALFRED SCHAAF

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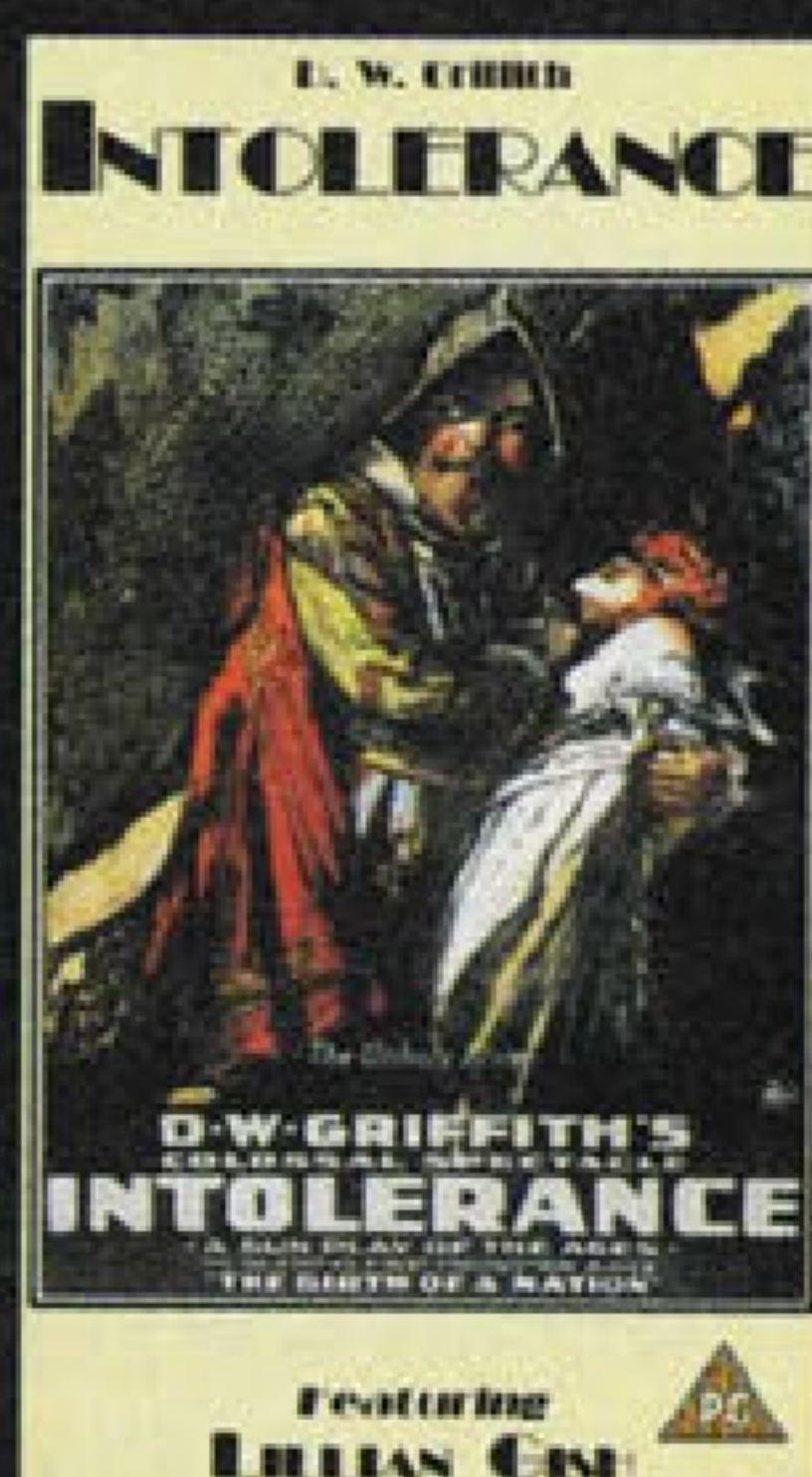
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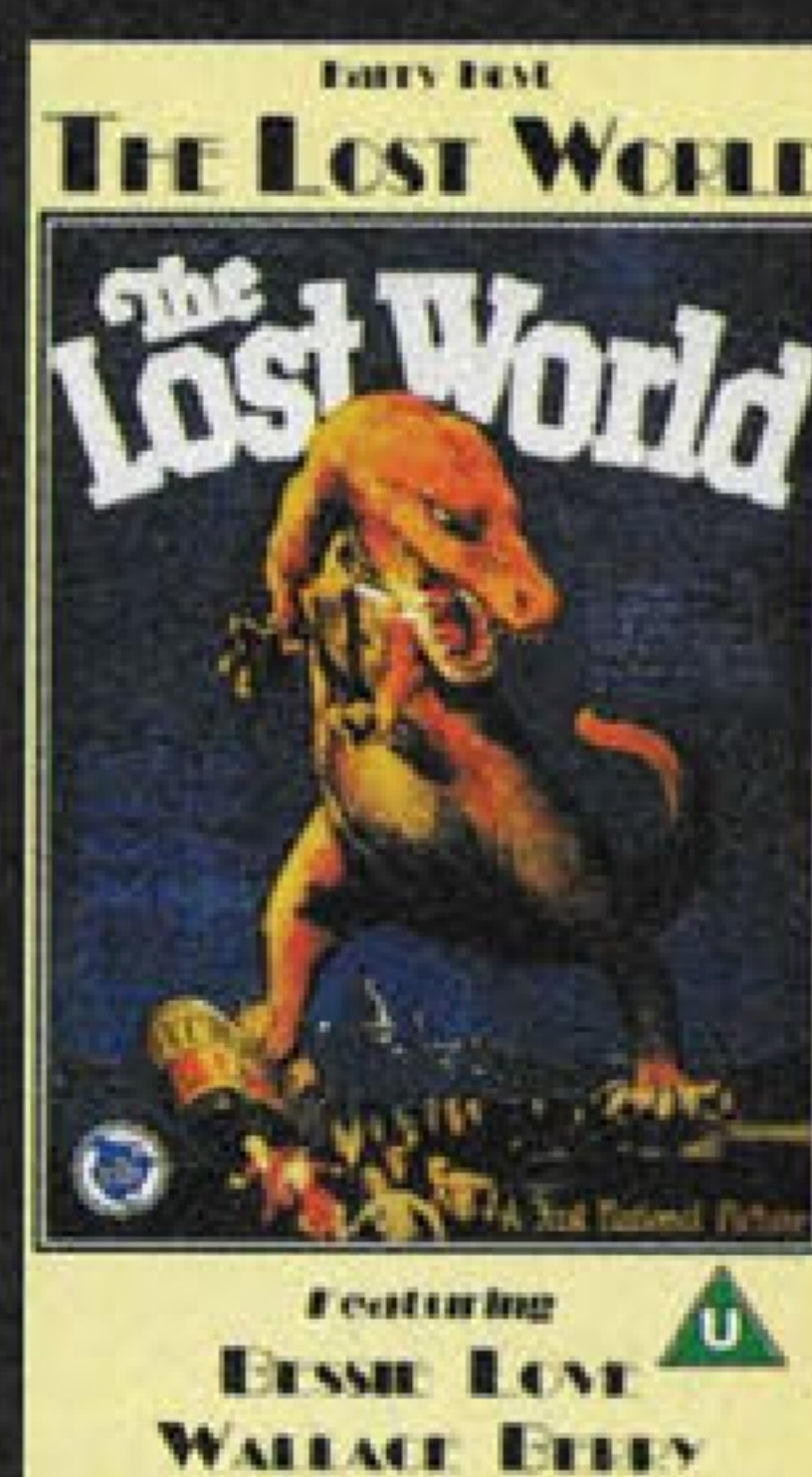
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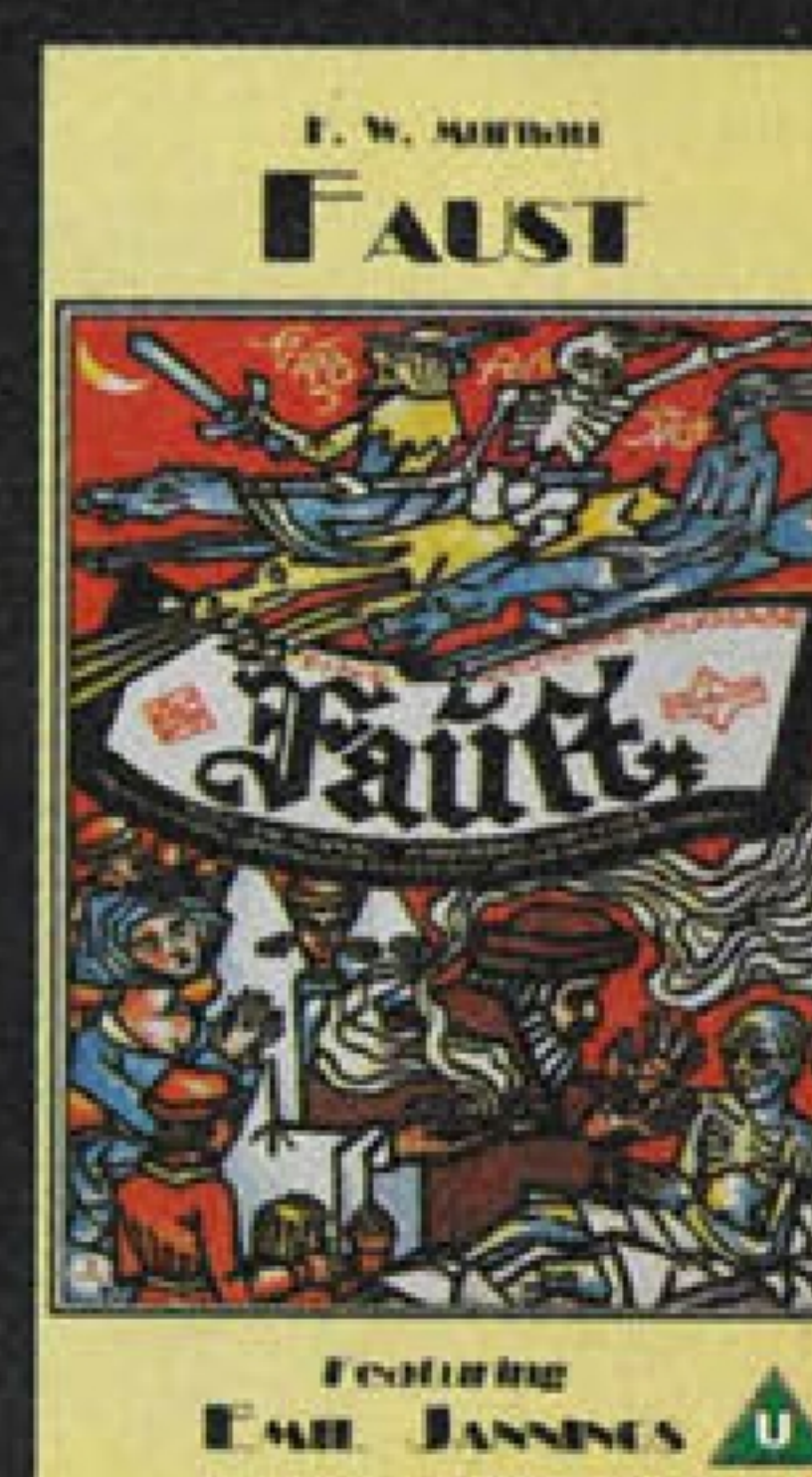
INTOLERANCE

Directed by D. W. Griffith
US 1916 • VRL 50



THE LOST WORLD*

Directed by Harry Hoyt
US 1925 • VRL 51



FAUST*

Directed by F. W. Murnau
GERMANY 1926 • VRL 52



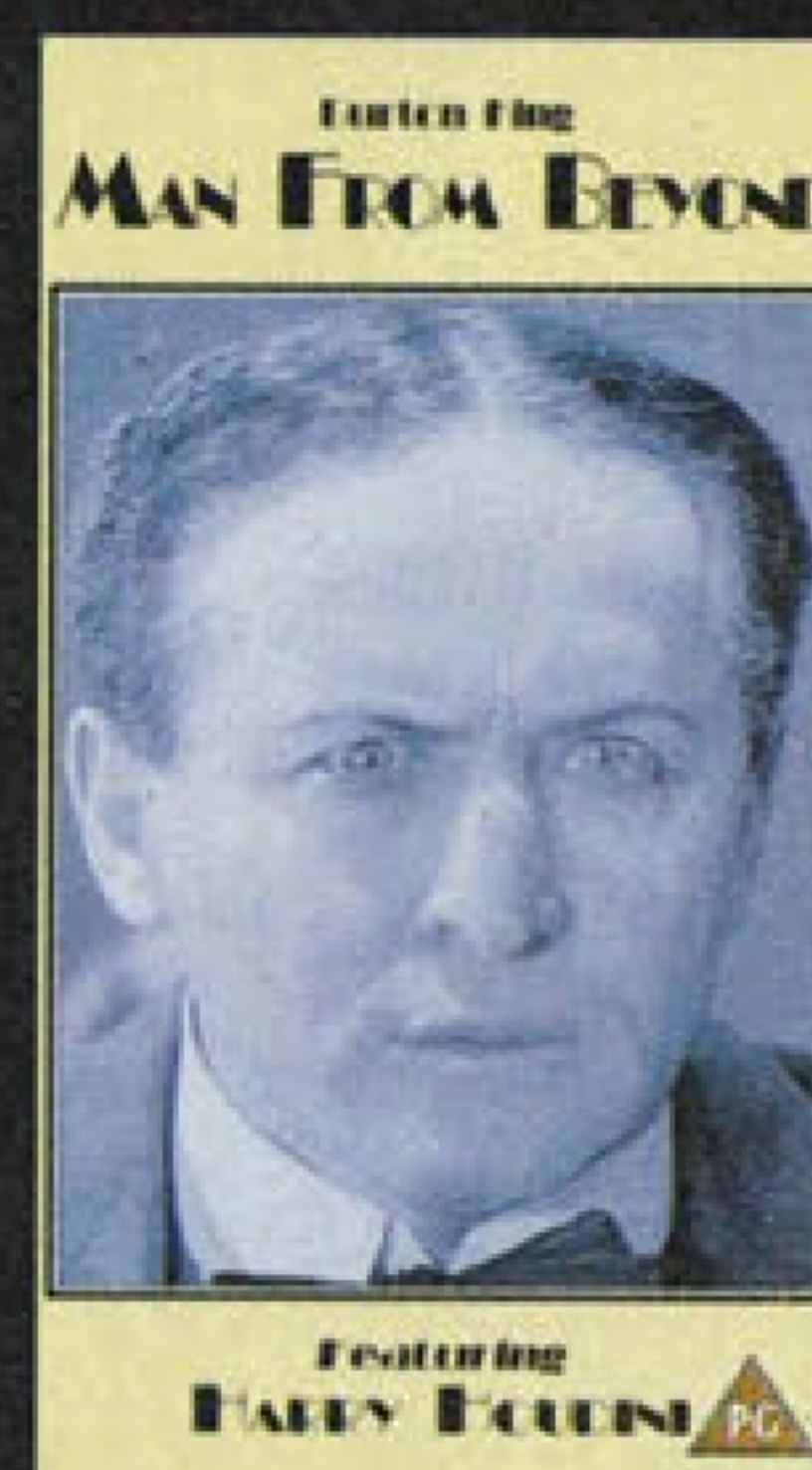
QUEEN KELLY*

Directed by Erich Von Stroheim
US 1916 • VRL 53



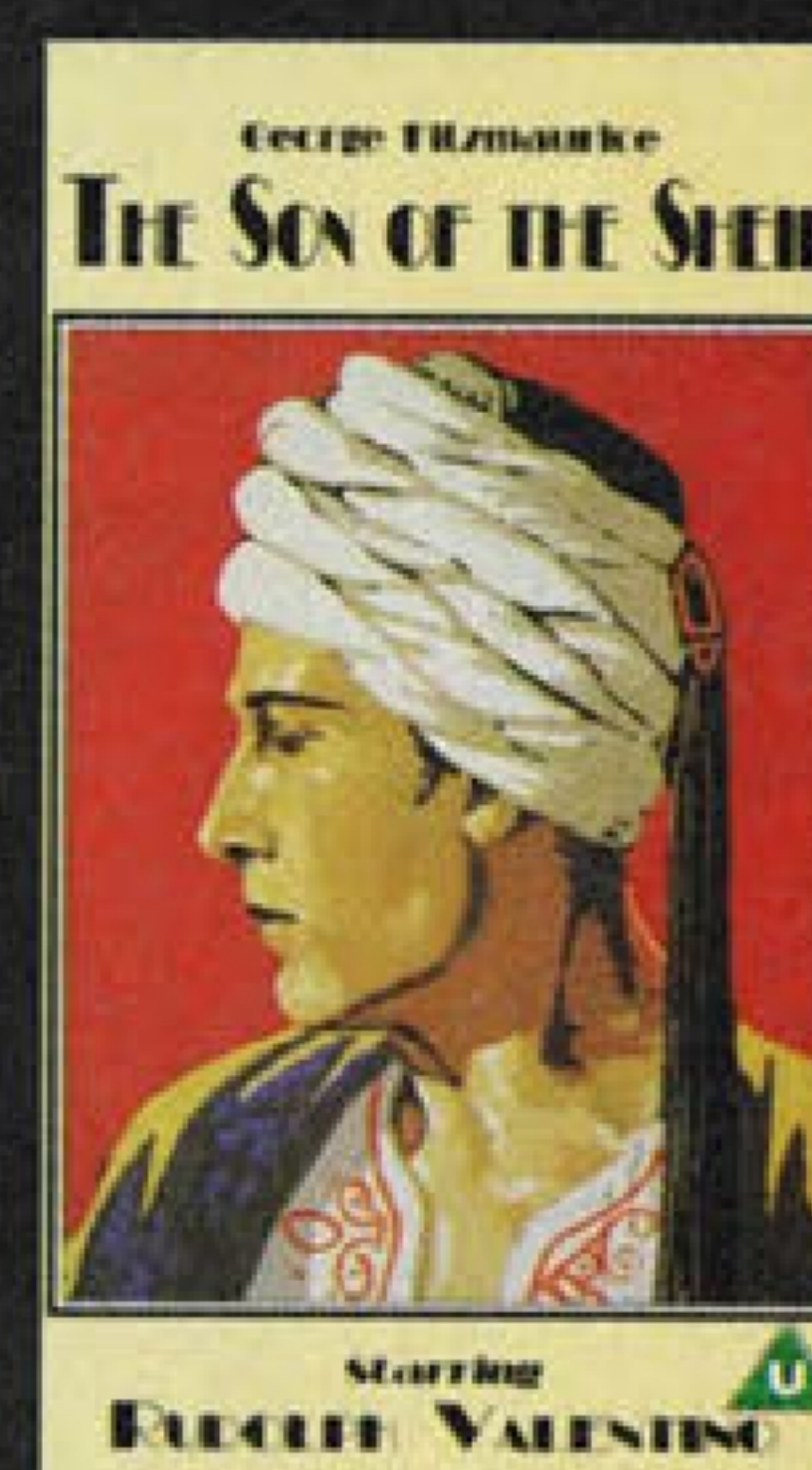
THE EAGLE

Directed by Clarence Brown
US 1925 • VRL 54



MAN FROM BEYOND

Directed by Burton King
US 1921 • VRL 55



THE SON OF THE SHEIK

Directed by George Fitzmaurice
US 1926 • VRL 57

* These films all feature newly recorded scores

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BROOKS AND THE BOB

What made Louise Brooks special?

Her trademark haircut? Her roles for Pabst and Hawks? Her power to define a 'look'?

By Peter Wollen

● Nearly 50 years after he had directed a film with Louise Brooks, Howard Hawks looked at a still photograph of her from *A Girl in Every Port* (1928) and wrote to Kevin Brownlow: "I wanted a different type of girl... a new type. I hired Louise Brooks because she's very sure of herself, she's very analytical, she's very feminine - but she's damned good and sure she's going to do what she wants to do. I could use her today. She was way ahead of her time. And she's a rebel. I like her, you know, I like rebels. I like people you can look at and you remember who they are."

When I first read this, I thought how shrewd Hawks always was, how sympathetic in unexpected ways, but also how shrewd Louise Brooks had been when she wrote, in 1977: "For 35 years I have been studying men's hatred of women. Mary Hemingway weighs it out in her book about Ernest. It is the Howard Hawks' two brave fighting buddies (homos) who 'prove' their 'masculinity' by occasional brutal rampages among women." And yet without Howard Hawks we might never have heard of Louise Brooks. It was, after all, as a result of seeing *A Girl in Every Port* that Pabst invited her to Berlin to make *Pandora's Box*, to place her centre stage, where she belonged.

But there is a twist to the story. After all, it is equally true that without Louise Brooks we might never have heard of Howard Hawks. Even now, people are often surprised that he should be considered one of the great directors, his Hollywood films the touchstone of what cinema should be. Why Hawks? The answer is simple. Henri Langlois, who became the founder and director of the Paris Cinémathèque, went out of his way to collect and preserve Hawks' films and, as a result, the young critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* were able to see them and learn from them. As Jacques Rivette put it: "Hawks taught the *Cahiers* school all that is best in the classical American cinema, particularly inspiring them with his ability to personalise the diverse genres in which he worked." But why did Langlois make such an effort to collect Hawks in the first place?

In 1928, at the age of 15, he had been thunderstruck by Hawks' silent masterpiece *A Girl in Every Port*, starring Victor McLaglen and Robert Armstrong (as the typical Hawksian buddies), with Louise Brooks playing the woman (Mam'selle Godiva, a circus stunt diver in Marseilles: shades of *Lola Montès*). In 1963, 35 years after this first crucial viewing, Langlois wrote an article in homage to Hawks for *Cahiers du cinéma*. "To the Paris of 1928," he said, "which was rejecting expressionism, *A Girl in Every Port* was a film conceived in the present, achieving an identity of its own by repudiating the past. To look at the film is to see yourself, to see the future." And encapsulating the modernity was Brooks: "the modern artist *par excellence*."

In 1955 Langlois presented a historic exhibition in Paris to celebrate 60 years of cinema. At the entrance of the exhibition, held in the Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, he hung two gigantic photo-portraits, blown up from film stills - one of Renée Jeanne Falconetti in Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), the other of Brooks in Pabst's *Pandora's Box*. An out- ►

BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (2)



A new type of girl:
the epitome of modernity,
Louise Brooks' appeal
was determined by the
way she looked – and
primarily by her haircut

◀ raged critic complained to Langlois about his choice of Brooks, and Langlois shouted back: "There is no Garbo! There is no Dietrich! There is only Louise Brooks!" Defiantly, he wrote: "As soon as she comes on the screen, fiction disappears along with art, and one has the impression of watching a documentary. The camera seems to have caught her by surprise, almost without her knowing it. She is the intelligence of the cinematic process, of all that is photogenic; she embodies all that the cinema rediscovered in the last years of the silent film: complete naturalness and complete simplicity. Her art is so pure that it becomes invisible."

What, then, was the key to Louise Brooks' belated ascent to an iconic status beyond even that of Garbo and Dietrich? What was it that made her, in Hawks' limpid phrase, someone "you can look at and remember who they are"? First and foremost, of course, it was the trademark haircut, the Louise Brooks bob. The analysis of haircuts has as yet not played a substantial part in film theory or scholarship, although Roland Barthes' celebrated essay on haircuts in Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar* provides a fine precedent. But there is no doubt that the most visible and memorable reason for Brooks' instant appeal was simply the way she looked, and that the way she looked was primarily determined by her haircut. It was the haircut, for instance, which was to be the marker of 'Brooksness' in such acts of filmic homage as the appearance of Cyd Charisse in *Singin' in the Rain*, of Anna Karina in *Vivre sa vie* and of Melanie Griffith in *Something Wild*.

Cartoons and the bob

Louise Brooks did not invent or even popularise the filmic bob. That honour goes to Colleen Moore, who wore a bob in her 1923 hit *Flaming Youth* and continued with it as her trademark from then on. Moore was a star before Brooks and a very much bigger star at the time, bigger in her heyday than Pickford or Swanson, with a fanmail of 10,000 letters a week. In 1927 the Paramount publicity office described Brooks' own bob as "a combination of the Pola Negri, Florence Vidor and Colleen Moore bobs, retaining the distinctive features of each... Colleen Moore's Dutch cut in front, and the Negri side effect and the Vidor rear ensemble." On the other hand, family photographs show Brooks with a definite bob as a very young child, and around 1916, when she was ten years old and first began to dance in public, her mother purposefully took her to the barber to cut off her braids and give her a Dutch bob with a fringe down to her eyebrows.

At the time this bob was called a Buster Brown haircut – a label that is not insignificant. The cartoon character Buster Brown was a young boy who was dressed as a 'sissy' but proved to be a rough-and-tumble kid at heart – in fact, an incorrigible scamp. His hair was drawn rather shorter than Little Lord Fauntleroy's, at a carefully calibrated critical length, so that (on Buster) it was 'girlish' for a boy, but (on Louise) it would be 'boyish' for a girl. Thus from the start it was a signifier both of youth (a child's cut, an 'innocent' cut) and of an unsettling androgyny. In France it was known

The effect was intensified by her long neck and large, dark eyes, outlined in black for emphasis, eyes whose neutral gaze was often directed straight into the camera

as the 'Joan of Arc' cut (another uncanny link between Brooks and Falconetti).

Louise Brooks was to be associated with cartoon characters more than once in her life. Buster Brown ceased publication in the *New York Journal* in 1921, but in 1928 a new cartoon featuring Dixie Dugan was launched in the *New York Daily News*. The publisher of the *News* gave one of his cartoonists a photograph of Brooks in her 1926 film *The American Venus* and asked him to develop a comic strip from it. Dixie Dugan ran until 1962 (by which time she had stopped being a showgirl and become an airline hostess). Three years later, hard on the heels of the Godard film and as part of the burgeoning Louise Brooks cult, the Italian pornographic comic strip artist Crepax launched his character Valentina (who, in 1977, even went to the cinema to see 'herself' in *Pandora's Box*).

Comic strip artists were attracted to Brooks because her haircut was geometrical, like a design, and gave her face a clear outline and strong black and white contrast. Brooks' shingled and lacquered hair (her 'helmet') was a deep blue-black, and she set it off with thick white make-up, "as white as a camellia" (thus effacing her freckles). She herself described it as looking like an Aubrey Beardsley ink drawing in its definition and massed regions of black and white, as well, no doubt, as in its suggestion of decadence. The effect was intensified by her long neck and large, dark eyes, outlined in black for emphasis, eyes whose neutral gaze was often directed straight into the camera.

Thus Brooks' face became a kind of logo, depending not on the expression of inner soulfulness or on the intensity of her look, as with her peers Asta Nielsen or Greta Garbo, but on a dynamic surface and instant visual impact. Even compared with Dietrich, her other obvious rival, her face is flat and clear-cut rather than modulated by Von Sternberg's virtuoso lighting to bring out the underlying bone structure and nuances of contour. In *Pandora's Box* this cartoon look was right for the film: Pabst was aiming to move beyond Expressionism, to create a 'modern' cinema. The simplicity of the Brooks mask and haircut, like her implicit 'Americanism' in the German context, created the impression he wanted.

Henri Langlois associated the immediate visual impact made by Louise Brooks with the idea of the 'photogenic', derived from the writings of the great French theorists of silent cinema he read in the 20s, Louis Delluc and Jean Epstein. Langlois was particularly influenced by Epstein, who, like Hawks, was a director whose works he made a special effort to collect for the Cinémathèque. In 1953 Langlois organised a homage to Jean Epstein at the Cannes Film Festival and the following year Epstein's

sister, Marie, came to work with him at the Cinémathèque. There she joined Lotte Eisner, the German author-in-exile of *The Haunted Screen*, the classic book on German cinema of the 20s (published in Paris in 1952), which contained a poignant chapter on 'Pandora's Box and the Miracle of Louise Brooks'. The Cinémathèque thus became the natural place to knot together the 20s French theory of *photogénie*, the 20s 'Americanism' of Hawks and Hollywood, and the miraculous translation of Louise Brooks, by Pabst, into Weimar Germany.

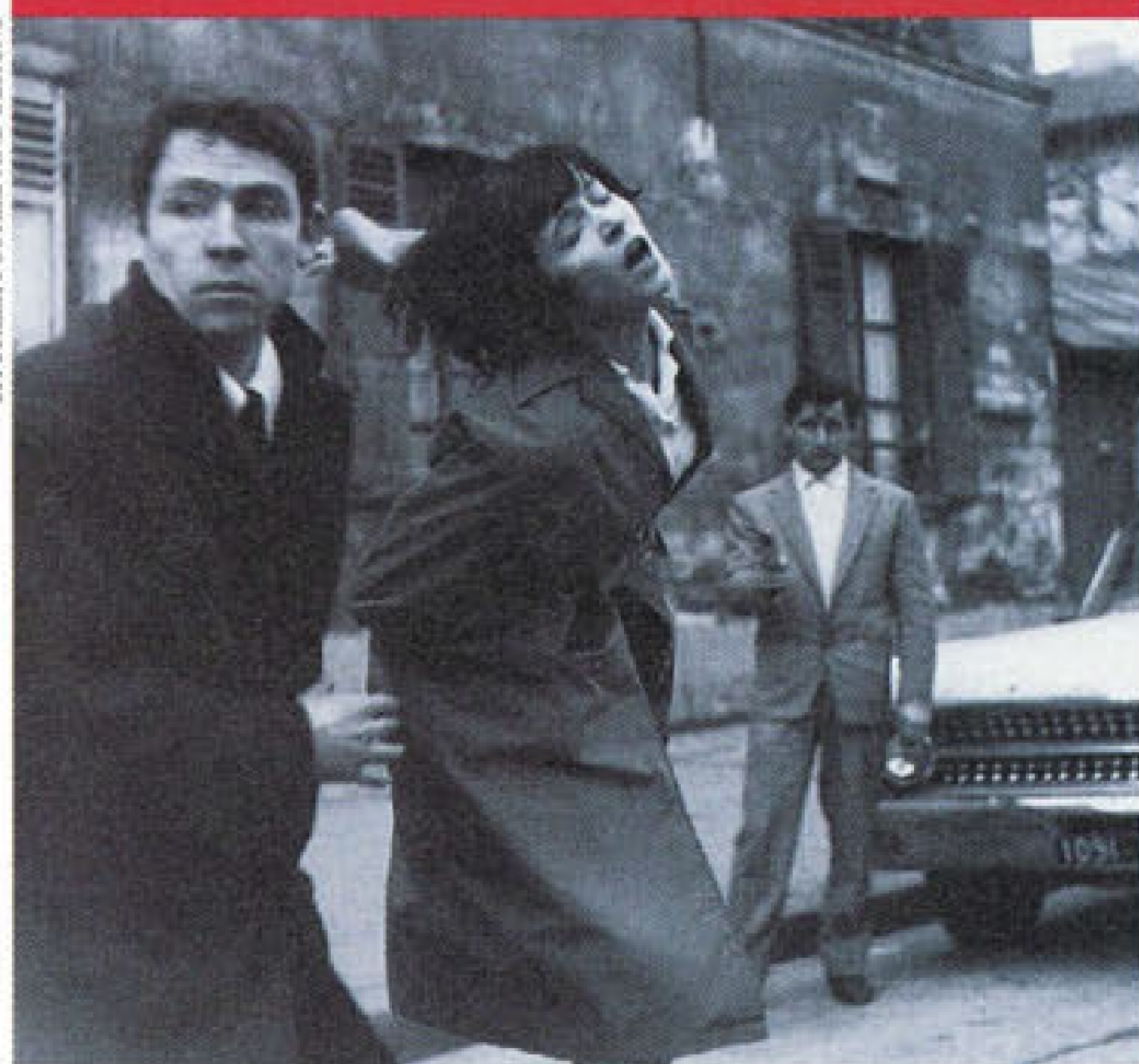
Epstein, in his programmatic essay of 1924 'On Certain Characteristics of *Photogénie*', singles out the role of movement in the cinema as its aesthetic essence. As well as Brooks' visual look, it is important to emphasise her ease of movement. Pabst, sadly, was not a director given to long takes and complex camera movements, but a director of short shots, *chiaroscuro* and tilted angles. Nonetheless, Pabst gave Brooks the confidence to be herself as a performer, to live her part on the set as naturally as she could (and, in the case of *Pandora's Box*, as she points out, her part was one she was familiar with from her own time as a Follies showgirl and rich man's companion, from her own eclectic and impulsive sexual life).

Condemned to cinema

Brooks began her performance career as a dancer. Pushed by an ambitious mother, she left home in Wichita for New York to study at the Denishawn dance school (1922-24) and subsequently graduated to appear professionally in the company's dance concerts in New York, in its home base of Los Angeles, and on tour. Denishawn was named after its founders, Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn, who together created both the major dance school in Hollywood and the major company to introduce 'modern dance' to the whole of the US, ceaselessly touring, performing and propagandising at home rather than following a stellar career in Europe as did Isadora Duncan. In practical terms, Denishawn was American modern dance.

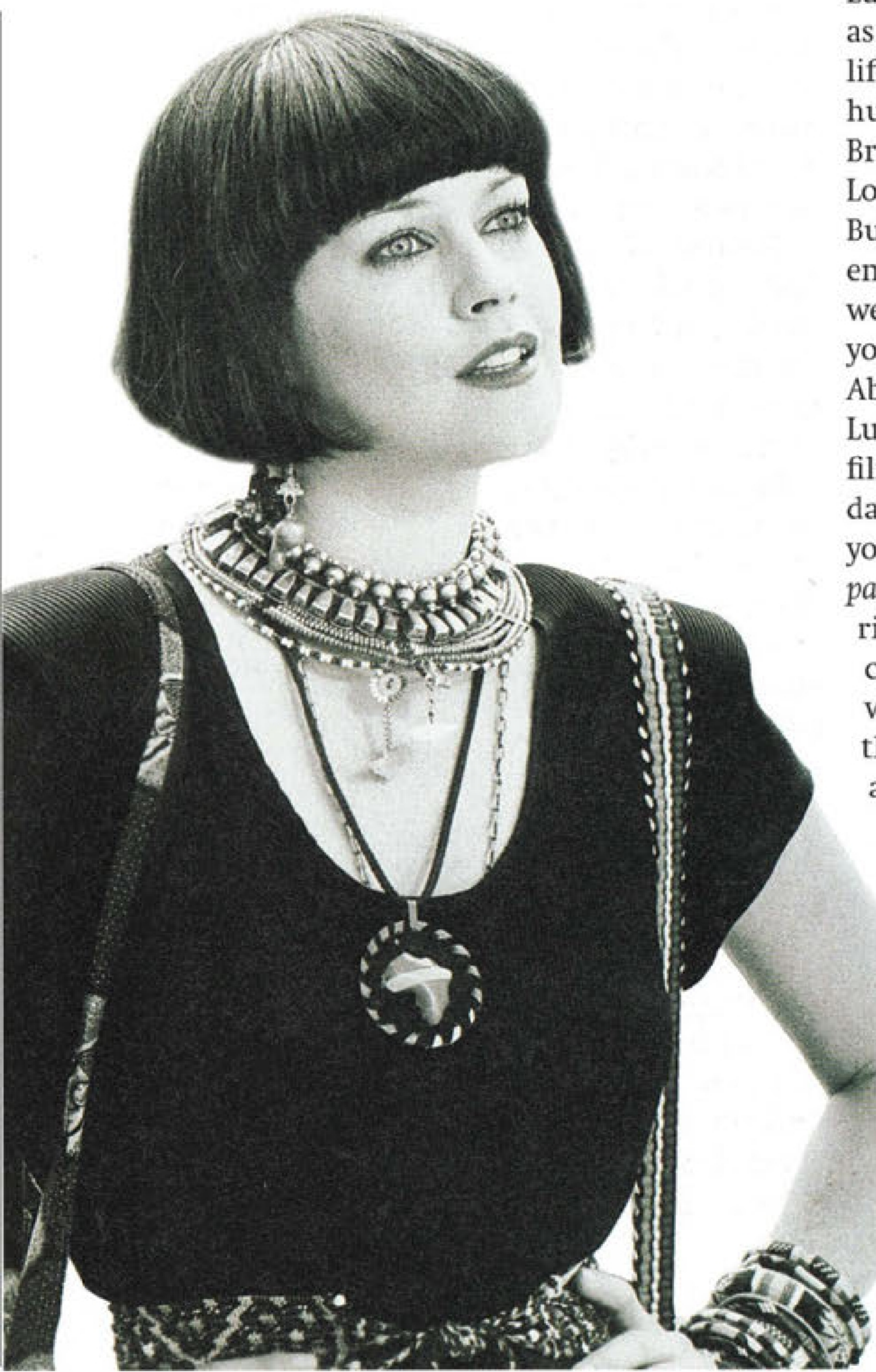
Because of its Hollywood base, Denishawn had a particularly close relationship with the movies. In its early years the Gish sisters studied there (Griffith sent all his leading ladies there for dance classes), as well as Mabel Normand, Blanche Sweet, Mae Marsh, Florence Vidor and many others. Brooks' predecessor at Denishawn was none other than Colleen Moore. Dance was an important avenue into silent cinema precisely because of the importance of bodily movement and mime. At Denishawn the young Brooks was taught basic ballet, Delsartean mime and Denishawn's own brand of modern dance, whose characteristic spins and outstretched arms can be seen performed (all too briefly) by Brooks in *Pandora's Box*. As a teenager she had already danced in concert opposite Shawn himself, playing a Hopi Indian princess in his *Feather of the Dawn*.

But the most important influence on Brooks at Denishawn was Martha Graham, then the company's up-and-coming new star, Ted Shawn's partner in their pioneering Mexican ballet *Xochitl*, and soloist in her own *Serenata Morisca*. Louise Brooks often remarked: "I



Restyling it: Yvonne Rainer's dark remodelling of Lulu in 'Lives of Performers', top; Anna Karina in Godard's 'Vivre sa vie', where

'Cahiers du cinéma' met Hollywood, above; Melanie Griffith's homage to Brooks in Jonathan Demme's 'Something Wild', below



learned how to act by watching Martha Graham dance." Her own ambition was to become not a Hollywood star, but what Martha Graham became: a great dancer. In 1979 she wrote: "Martha Graham is a superb actress whose unpopular monkey face in that period of candy-box prettiness kept her out of the theatre. So she turned dialogue into dance. What I would give to see her *Hedda Gabler*." Condemned to cinema by her beauty, that was what Brooks still aspired to: turning dialogue into dance, finding a form of expression appropriate for silent film in bodily movement. The 'photogenic' impact made by Brooks depended on her dance background, and, especially, on the Denishawn training which enabled her to make controlled movements appear natural.

If the rediscovery of *Pandora's Box* began in Paris in 1955 and was consolidated three years later by Langlois' retrospective of Brooks' films, for which she travelled to Paris in person to hang out with Lotte Eisner, Man Ray and Kenneth Anger, the full cult of Louise Brooks did not explode until it coincided with the rediscovery (or reinvention) of Weimar Germany as a site of 'decadence'. In 1966 the musical *Cabaret* opened on Broadway, to be made into a film by Bob Fosse in 1972. In *Cabaret* the most direct filmic reference is to Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* (1930), a study in female sadism, as it is also in Visconti's *The Damned* (1969) and Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1973), both set in the context of Nazism. Louise Brooks had brought *Pandora's Box* back into fashion; now *Pandora's Box*, with its Weimar associations, fed back into the cult of Louise Brooks. Her role, however, in contrast to Dietrich's, is a study in masochism.

Pandora's Box was made the year before the Great Crash and portrays a shimmering world of revue and cabaret in which showgirls like Lulu mingle with the rich and powerful, as well as with a *demi-monde* of lesbian artists and low-life pimps. Lulu's lover, patron and eventual husband is a powerful press baron (reminding Brooks of Hearst and Marion Davies, as well as Lord Beaverbrook and his showgirl proteges). But this high-bourgeois society which Lulu enters is one in which a jazz band plays at her wedding party and the bridegroom's attractive young son is desperately in love with the bride. Above all, the lesbian relationship between Lulu and the Countess Geschwitz is vital to the film. Charles Weidman, the ex-Denishawn dancer, once observed: "Louise, everybody says you're a lesbian, but you're not really, you're a pansy." Despite all her evasions and demurrings, Brooks' androgyny was central to her cult allure. Her piquant autobiographical writings, published from the late 50s through the 60s (many of them in *Sight and Sound*) only added to the confusion of documentary and fiction, making her not only a wicked chronicler of Weimar (and Hollywood) decadence, but also a symbol of its polymorphous perversity.

Pandora's Box seems to end with an act of moral retribution. Lulu is murdered by Jack the Ripper, the first modern serial killer, whose chosen victims were all prostitutes. Just before the end, her killer, moved

by her innocence and generosity (she offers herself to him as a gift), throws away his own knife, his murder weapon, only to find his gaze fixed obsessively on a kitchen knife lying by chance on the table in her garret. Prey to his compulsion to kill, he *must* reach out for it, even as he kisses her, and plunge it into her rapturous, unsuspecting body. She dies in the act of love. We know he will never be caught: he is Jack the Ripper.

Lulu is an oblivious victim. In the same way, she found a gun in her hand by chance when she killed her husband, and it too was an unwilling act, a strange but fatal compulsion. Lulu and Jack are doubles, equally innocent because equally unable to control their own actions, *enfants sauvages*. The obvious cinematic sibling of *Pandora's Box* is Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), the story of another infamous serial killer, the Düsseldorf child murderer. Lang's film is often seen as premonitory, the mass murders foreshadowing the imminent arrival of Nazism and the demented bloodbath to come. Yet *Pandora's Box* does not work in the same way. It is not a film about cruelty and vice, but about suffering and martyrdom, even sanctity.

If Lulu is a *femme fatale*, she is one whose predominant quality is that of innocence, a lightness of being which is precisely what acts as a lure to those she carelessly fascinates, who crush her with their heaviness but must also share in her downfall. Her sexuality brings suffering to all it touches, not least herself, but she is not a vamp or a man-eater. She is an impetuous, uncalculating, unsocialised child of nature. Indeed, Pabst's choice of an American to play the role must have been determined by his wish to contrast America (perceived as young and innocent, energetic and impulsive: the New World) with Europe (perceived as old and corrupted, manipulative and morbid: the Old World).

Portent of doom

In 1971 the script of *Pandora's Box* was published in English translation, copiously illustrated with stills from the film. The next year Yvonne Rainer made her film *Lives of Performers*, ending it with a re-enactment of the story of Lulu through *poses plastiques*, based on the stills in the script. Actors walk into frame, take up the positions of the figures in the stills, hold them without moving for a determinate period of time, then break and exit frame. During the last three minutes of this performance, Rainer brought the Rolling Stones' 'No Expectations' in and up on the soundtrack. The modernity and vitality which Langlois had seen in Brooks over 40 years before has corroded into bitter disenchantment and a masochistic obsession with impending death. Hawks' "new type of girl" has become a symbol of the death drive, a portent of doom. In Godard's *Vivre sa vie*, Nana (Lulu's double) goes by chance into a cinema to watch Falconetti as Joan of Arc. The subtitle of the shot we see reads: "And my deliverance, death." Like Nana in *Vivre sa vie*, the prostitute who sells her body but keeps her soul, Lulu is condemned to martyrdom, but, like St Joan, death is also her deliverance.

'Pandora's Box' is available on Tartan Video

England meets India in Blackpool in Gurinder Chadha's 'Bhaji on the Beach'. She talks with Andrea Stuart about comedy, television, Englishness and Asian women

BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATION

● About a third of the way through *Bhaji on the Beach*, one of the film's most day-glo characters, the Bombay-based, Chanel-clad Rekha, clambers down from the coach, totters around the corner on her pink high heels and is confronted with her first, unforgettable glimpse of Blackpool. The sight is so gloriously gaudy, and above all familiar, that her awe-filled response is almost involuntary: "It's Bombay!" she exclaims.

It is a moment that *Bhaji*'s director, Gurinder Chadha, feels sums up the film. "I do think that Blackpool, when the Illuminations are on, is where England meets India. I bet that if the film goes out in India there will be directors who will want to come and film here."

Sometimes home is not as far away as it seems. And it is these issues of home, hybridity, identity and belonging that preoccupy Chadha in *Bhaji*, the first feature film to be directed by an Asian woman in Britain. "What I've tried to do with all my work is to open up all that stuff – what it is to be British. What I'm doing is making a claim, as well as documenting a history of British Asian people." In his collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands*, Salman Rushdie makes it clear that "laying claim" is not a pursuit without pitfalls. How do you preserve cultural values without falling into a ghetto mentality? How do you discuss the need for change without playing into the hands of the enemy? It is a question that transcends politics, nationality, even race. "It is a question", he remarks, "of how to be in the world."

A very English film

"I hate to say this – people always raise their eyebrows when I do – but I was quite lucky," Chadha says as we discuss her rise in the film business in her north London living room. Her career started when her first short film, *I'm British But...*, was accepted for the pilot intake of the BFI's New Directors scheme. The shot of a sari-clad Chadha clutching a British bulldog summed up what the television executives were looking for. "It was the first offering by a second-generation Asian, and Channel 4 was interested to explore this new sense of British and Asian identity." On the strength of *I'm British But...* Chadha submitted the treatment for *Bhaji*, but Channel 4 and her producer Nadine Marsh-Edwards persuaded her to develop her skills with an 11-minute film for the *Short and Curlies* season: *A Nice Arrangement*. They were happy with the result, and *Bhaji* got the green light. The process of making the film was gruelling, Chadha recalls, with endless

meetings, rewrites and rethinking. "I reckon I learned three years of film school in the time of *Bhaji*'s development," she laughs.

Bhaji was inspired by an idea brought to her by actress/writer Meera Syal about a group of Asian women who go to the seaside for the day. But Chadha was insistent that she didn't want the film to be "just a comedy. So I picked the two most taboo subjects within the Asian community – mixed relationships and separation and divorce – and threw them in as well." The day trip is organised by Simi, who works for the Saheli Asian Women's Centre. She is a feminist, socialist activist who nonetheless has to negotiate a careful path between the traditional views of the "aunties" and the younger women like Madhu and Ladhu who just want to chase boys. The other women on the outing are as much at odds: Ginder, who wants time to think through her broken marriage; Asha and Pushpa, who want to get out from behind their husbands' shop counters; and Hashida, who is involved in a clandestine affair with a young West Indian. Like so many journeys, the trip becomes a turning point, a moment of choice, from which they will not return unchanged.

With its picaresque coach journey, stops at motorway cafés and Punjabi version of 'We're All Going on a Summer Holiday', *Bhaji on the Beach* presents a world in which *Carry On up the Khyber* meets Cliff Richard. When I ask whether the film was a deliberate attempt to invade white-only spaces, Chadha bristles. "I don't like the word invade. It implies a traditionally European view of history: them and us, they are taking our land, that sort of thing. What I am saying is that there is no such thing as ours and theirs. There is no part of Britain or England that I can't lay claim to." Born and bred in Britain, Chadha points out that she has been very much influenced by "the look of England, as I've experienced it in things like *A Taste of Honey*, *Up the Junction* and the *Carry On* films, which have a very constructed sense of Englishness." She continues: "I think of *Bhaji* as a very English film."

"The premise of the film is based on all our lives, all our experiences – writer, director, producer, actors, everyone." What has pleased her about the performances of her large-ensemble cast, despite a too short rehearsal time, is that "they brought a real complexity to the characters, to the sort of cross-referenced identities we all share." Yet *Bhaji* is not as seamless a product as the statement implies. From its very inception the film was part of two very different traditions. On the one hand there is Syal, a veteran

television writer with credits that include *Black Silk* and *Tandoori Nights*. And on the other is Chadha, whose politics have emerged out of the polemical tradition of black British art cinema exemplified by Sankofa, where producer Marsh-Edwards established herself.

A secret weapon

Chadha, who has a degree in politics and economics and a work background dominated by television journalism, says of herself: "I came to this work as someone who was very conscious of how the media constructs images of black people. What I'm interested in doing is counter-acting those images of how I – as a black woman – should be, rather than looking at the multiplicity and complexity of what I actually am." The uneasy creative coupling accounts for both the film's strengths and its weakness. Veering between high drama and slapstick comedy, *Bhaji*'s rollercoaster tonal shifts can make the viewer queasy, while at moments it has a formulaic *Film on Four* feel, lacking the grit that has been Chadha's strong point. Yet it is the slick one-liners that salvage a rather 'issuey' film: without them, its protagonists – the battered wife, teen pregnancy and inter-racial couple – could have become mere mouthpieces, burdened as much by their politics as by their picnic hampers.

Humour has always been Chadha's secret weapon. "Whenever anyone describes one of my plots as 'A group of Asian women...' they think they have my number. So all my films have comedy in them to wrong foot people, to disrupt their expectations and to make them think about things in a different way." Being black, after all, is supposed to be a serious business, and in Britain it is only the gleeful sit-com paradise ruled by Lenny Henry, *Desmonds* and re-runs of the awful *Mind Your Language* that provide any respite.

Chadha is loath, however, to claim television as an influence. (For British film directors, already nervous of being subsumed by a media so much more powerful than their own, this would always be a difficult admission.) Perhaps, though, she is wrong to be so dismissive: it has been television that has provided us with a comedic sense of the black community, and it is television comedy, with its tradition of combining politics and gags, that *Bhaji* resembles.

If she is hesitant about television, Chadha is more than willing to pay her debt to the Indian cinema around which much of her social life as a teenager in Southall was organised. Her characters often make trenchant asides in Punjabi.



Day tripper: Ginder (Kim Vithana) takes time out to resolve the problems of her marriage

"It gives it a certain authenticity," she argues, "a certain tension. It allows me to claim back some of myself from the mainstream media." *Bhaji's* aesthetic quality is certainly borrowed from Bombay: with its vivid colours and cartoon-like set-ups, it has that overblown but energetic crudity that could only have come from the Indian film industry or American super-hero comics.

Chadha singles out two films as particular influences: *Baju Bawara* (her father's favourite) and *Purab aur Patcham* (*East or West*), a hilarious critique of the west's supposedly corrupting effect on Asian youth. "When I was growing up this is what everyone thought those of us brought up here were like. So when I wanted a shorthand for England's ruinous effect on 'good' Asian girls, I just took an image of a blonde-wigged, red mini-skirted, cigarette-puffing character." 'Back home' and its mores shadow the women in *Bhaji* like clouds obscuring the sun. But even India, as Rekha points out, isn't the same any more: it too has been transformed, susceptible like everywhere else to the relentless dynamics of change.

Whatever *Bhaji's* limitations on its home turf, one can't help but feel that its definite 'Made in Britain' stamp will mean that like *Monty Python* and Colman's mustard, it will do well abroad. (What is Englishness these days but the country's most – some would say only – exportable industry?) The film received a standing ovation at the Locarno Film Festival and an enthusiastic review in American *Elle*, which

put it somewhere between two of 1993's "best of British": *The Snapper* and *Naked*.

Comparisons with at least two other films – *My Beautiful Laundrette* and Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* – are, Chadha admits, inevitable. "As far as *My Beautiful Laundrette* goes, I think the most interesting thing is that the film was made ten years ago and this is the first thing that has happened since. *Laundrette* was irreverent and depicted our community in a very different way, but I think it came from the heart of Hanif Kureishi, who is biracial, and of Stephen Frears, who is English, unlike someone like myself who is Punjabi." The comparisons with *Mississippi Masala* are harder to dismiss. Both films share an inter-racial theme, a large-ensemble cast and a belief in the importance of hybridity. Chadha plays down the similarities, but admits: "I have a lot to thank Mira for. After all, she opened up America for me. There people are describing *Bhaji* as a British *Mississippi Masala*, so even though I don't have Denzel" – she laughs – "I still have some appeal."

Out of the kitchen

Curiously enough, it is to another of Kureishi's works that she is happiest to compare *Bhaji*. "I loved *The Buddha of Suburbia*. In the half-English, half-Indian character of Kremmie (Karim) he manages to capture a sense of Englishness and Indianness in one person. There's no identity crisis, he isn't torn between two cultures – none of those clichés. He has a wholeness, a sense of belonging in both worlds rather than

being comfortable in neither." It is this dual sensibility which Chadha hopes underlies *Bhaji*: "In the characters, how it is shot to be very English and Asian at the same time, very traditional and yet very modern." Even the score, which is on a sliding scale from classical Indian music to a complete fusion in a ragga style, is used "to signpost the characters' place on the tradition trail."

Cultural tensions. Duality. These were keynotes in a recent Channel 4 news item on Asian women film-makers in which Chadha was prominently featured. But to some extent she believes that their collective media pull is based on an amazement that Asian women are film-makers at all. "The idea of the delicate beauty with doe eyes and a long sari, lovingly cooking curries for her husband, is an image everyone loves on a mail-order basis. They can't get over the fact that we have left the kitchen."

She is loath to generalise about the reasons for the current prominence of Asian women film-makers, but when pressed guardedly suggests: "Because of struggles with our parents and community, perhaps we have had to fight for our independence and establish a more honest way of looking at ourselves. Perhaps Asian men have had to question themselves less. It's something I would have liked to have concentrated on more. Our men, being mother's sons, are encouraged to see themselves as better than women, which is especially problematic now, when our women are bright and articulate and aren't willing to put up with the same shit as their mothers did."

Chadha is right to be wary of what she says about her film. Accusations that *Bhaji* is "clichéd", "stereotypical", "disloyal to the community" are already brewing. It is possible that like the first black feature made in this country, Isaac Julien's much maligned *Young Soul Rebels*, *Bhaji* will be crushed by the weight of all those who feel themselves misrepresented, misunderstood or simply ignored.

Which would be a shame. Good or bad, full of positive representations or not, films like these matter too much. No film-maker can hope to represent everyone the way they want to be represented, and no film-maker should have to try. At best, a director like Chadha can point out openings, options: "What I'm trying to say is that Britain isn't one thing or another. It isn't just *Howards End* or *My Beautiful Laundrette*. There are endless possibilities about what it can be – and is – already."

'Bhaji on the Beach' opens on 21 January and is reviewed on page 47 of this issue

Chen Kaige, director, below;
Leslie Cheung in Kaige's
'Farewell My Concubine',
opposite



CHEN KAIGE AND THE SHADOWS OF THE REVOLUTION

Chinese novelist Jianying Zha tracks Chen Kaige from Mao's China to a New York apartment and back to Beijing, as she reflects on the fate of their generation of Chinese intellectuals and film-makers

● Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* may be Chinese cinema's greatest success – in the west, at least. It opened in the US in autumn to showers of critical accolades and entranced, steady audiences. The *New York Times* found it "one of those very rare film spectacles that deliver just about everything"; the *Washington Post* called it "lavish, splendid, ornate"; the *Los Angeles Times* called it "gorgeous and intoxicating"; *Newsweek* hailed it as "a cinematic grand slam" with "the lushness of Bertolucci and the sweeping narrative confidence of an old Hollywood epic." In New York, Madonna stopped in at a party given for Chen to tell him how much she liked it.

Amid all these hosannas from the west, Chinese officialdom has been gritting its teeth, more perturbed than pleased by the situation. Like many apparently inward-turned cultures, China has an almost paradoxical craving for the laurels of external validation. Yet Chen's movie was banned there, albeit temporarily, and is held partially responsible for the current chill in Chinese media circles. In Beijing, Chen was called to the Minister for Propaganda for a long chat. Since then, he has dropped two politically sensitive projects under consideration for his next film – including one about the harrowing experiences of a prisoner during the Cultural Revolution – and settled for a love story set safely in pre-communist China. Meanwhile, his producers and distributors in Hong Kong and the US are hoping to get *Farewell* into the Oscar competition as a Hong Kong entry.

"I'm disturbed by the way Chinese cinema is growing fashionable in the west," a French woman active in the film industry recently con-

fessed to me. She has long been an enthusiastic promoter of new Chinese cinema, but she now worries about its co-option by Hollywood and the western mainstream. To her and many others in China, the uneven fortunes of *Farewell* represent the dilemmas of Chinese cinema as it approaches maturity. And at the centre of all this ferment, buffeted between western approbation and Chinese disapproval, is Chen Kaige himself, the tortured, brilliant and charismatic creator of *Farewell*.

For Chen, the turning point had really come at Cannes. On 24 May 1993, after days of rumours, whispers and hand-wringing suspense, the official announcement was made. *Farewell My Concubine*, Chen Kaige's three-hour epic about love and death at the Peking Opera, had been awarded the top prize, the Palme d'Or, at the Cannes Film Festival. Since Jane Campion, director of the co-winner *The Piano*, had gone back to Australia seven months pregnant the previous Friday, the glory and glamour of the moment fell on Chen alone. It was an evening of paparazzi, floral bouquets, a black tie and champagne party. The next day, the *New York Times* showed a beaming Chen in a dinner jacket, one hand clutching his trophy, the other flashing a V sign.

It was a most uncharacteristic pose for those who know him, but Chen had every reason to relish the moment. He had earned a place in the history books alongside other film luminaries, and the honour, undoubtedly, would help the box office both in and outside China. He was *minglishuangshuo*, as the Chinese would say, reaping fame and fortune. And something else, too – vindication.

Given his public tact and reserve, Chen was hardly going to allude to professional rivalry. But anybody who knew anything about Chinese cinema would be aware of two things. First, that the celebrated film-maker Zhang Yimou started out as Chen's cinematographer. And second, that ever since they split up, Zhang had been on a winning streak and Chen on a losing one.

It was Chen who was first out of the box, Chen whose *Yellow Earth* heralded the arrival in 1984 of China's acclaimed Fifth Generation – the film-makers who came of age after Mao. And yet for several years now, Zhang has been the one Chinese name to appear in every international film festival and awards list, receiving two Oscar nominations (for *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern*) and a glittering assortment of other international prizes.

Virtually every one of Zhang's works has collected some notable award or other. And when he accepted a leading role in Wu Tianming's *Old Well* – his first acting part – the Tokyo Film Festival gave him the Best Actor award too. There seemed to be nothing the man couldn't do. The Chinese popular press was mesmerised by his accomplishments. He was regularly depicted as an elemental force of Chinese creativity: a genius, maestro, wizard, demiurge, a meteor blazing its way across our skies. Later, he was humorously given the nickname *dejiang-zhuanyehu* (the awards expert) – an allusion to the Chinese expression for a peasant entrepreneur who gets rich by a single trade (as in ►



◀ 'the rabbit-raising expert'). Adding to his mystique, his relationship with the beautiful Gong Li, the star of all his movies, has long been a hot item in China's gossipy tabloids – which have also serialised a sordidly detailed account of the affair by Zhang's estranged wife. There was no avoiding magazine covers of the glamorous pair: Gong Li, pale and delicate, beside Zhang Yimou, tense, scrubby, brooding. The public couldn't get enough of them.

Meanwhile, Chen Kaige, once hailed as a leader of an 80s renaissance in Chinese cinema, was making flop after flop, earning the rather dubious title of *zhelidaoyan* (the philosophical director) – that is, the sort of director whose highbrow films no one wants to see. Of course, Chen's attitude towards his former colleague's brilliant career was a subject of intense interest and speculation. A much discussed profile in a Shanghai version of *Esquire* reported that Chen once went to the lavatory with a newspaper article announcing a major prize Zhang had just won, and didn't emerge until almost an hour later, cursing: "He's a fucking cameraman, my cameraman!"

What made Chen's eventual triumph all the sweeter was the fact that Cannes had been the site of his previous humiliation. Before *Farewell, My Concubine*, Chen brought to the festival *King of the Children*, a ponderous if beautifully shot film about a young teacher in a small village, which he then considered his best work. He had his eyes on the Golden Palm, but he got the Golden Alarm Clock instead – for "the most boring picture of the year". Although for the tired critics and reporters the award was just a silly joke, it was no fun for Chen, who was already facing trouble back home for making strenuously experimental movies that were losing both money and audiences.

In 1991, after two years of tough fund raising in the US and a gruelling period of production in China, Chen returned to Cannes with *Life on a String*, a movie about a saintly, blind musician. Once again, the audience response was lukewarm and the reviews terrible. To make things worse, for obscure reasons, the movie failed to pass the Chinese censors and was never released in China. In the next two years, Chen's hair started to turn white.

Long before he took his place at the head of the Fifth Generation, Chen Kaige had impressed people as a golden boy. He was born in 1952 in Beijing to artistic parents, his father a well-known film director, his mother an actress and film editor. Since his father, whom he would later describe as the classically aloof Chinese patriarch, was often away on location, Chen and his sister were left in the care of two loving women: Chen's mother and a Manchu nanny who lived with the family. In the relative tranquillity of pre-Cultural Revolution Beijing, Chen recalls a childhood spent wandering through charming old neighbourhoods, lolling by flower and goldfish vendor carts, playing games with kindergarten friends by the local swimming pool. The family lived in an elegant walled-in compound, once the mansion of a Manchu prince of the early Qing dynasty.

Chen's mother, dressed in silk pyjamas, would settle into a bamboo lounge chair in the courtyard and teach her young son to recite classical poems selected to complement the changing seasons. "Beijing then was like the reflection of the turrets in the city moat," he would write in his memoirs, "a serene dream in a breeze, swaying yet unbroken."

With such a background, Chen seemed destined to shine in the world of the arts. Certainly he had an air about him: his thick, jet-black hair was always brushed back neatly; he would fix his companions with an intense stare as if he were studying the inner workings of their minds. In a crowd he would maintain his natural reserve, but in more intimate situations he would often impress his friends with the Tang poems that came tripping off his tongue. He was a trim six foot, wore good clothes, smoked expensive cigarettes with flair, and spoke in an elegant Beijing accent sprinkled with well-chosen classical phrases.

But perhaps his features were almost too clean, too neatly chiselled for a head full of deep thoughts. Perhaps there was too much of a matinee-idol look about Chen, whose face suggested a manicured young Mifune. In the mid-80s, Chen decided to grow a beard, complete with moustache and sideburns. The shrunken look made him look more bohemian, but also lent him a certain regal dignity. Indeed, some commented that on set Chen both looked and acted like an emperor. Nor did it escape notice when the bearded look became fashionable among young Beijing film types, especially young directors, who would bound around town in faded jeans and baseball caps turning people on and off like electric switches. But none could carry it off as well as Chen – without the height and the sleek good looks, the beards tended to look slovenly, accentuating any incipient pudginess.

Zhang Yimou, too, would become an icon, but he would never be a style-maker in the same sort of way. In some obvious respects, Zhang and Chen were the classic odd couple: yin and yang, whatever Chen was, Zhang was not. Raised in a provincial town far north of the capital, Zhang, with his crew-cut and short, stocky build, looks like an average village farm boy. In fact, his mother was a dermatologist, his father largely unemployed because he had been an officer in the KMT Nationalist army, fighting on the 'wrong side'. Zhang grew up in the shadow of the political stigma that surrounded his father. Years of tough labour on a farm and in a cotton mill have left marks on both his countenance and his character. He has the sort of face that can startle you when you begin to look at it closely. When he shuts his mouth, his cheeks cave in so abruptly, so deeply, that they evoke the old Chinese expression *tiantadixian* (the heaven collapses and the earth caves in). There is something resolutely sombre, even saturnine, about him: he doesn't talk to people unless he has to, and seldom enjoys talking unless it's about movies or the film industry.

Even after his phenomenal success, he still knocks around in plain jeans and plain, unstylish shirts. He insists – either with pride or modesty, it's hard to tell – that he doesn't know a

word of English. With peasant robustness, he doesn't mind eating noodles all the time. And by now it's a well-known story in China that he sold his blood to buy his first still camera.

Conflicting reports about Zhang abound. Among those who have worked for him, some describe a genuine man of the people, a director who never throws a fit, who does everything together with his crew including roughing it in backwater locations and digging ditches for the set. Others describe a slave driver. Everybody agrees that he's a workaholic, but that's because he has too many *jins* of creative oil to burn. I was once sitting with a boisterous roomful of Zhang's crew members; they were puffing on cigarettes, enjoying the video tapes they had shot of three potential locations, telling stories about how one of them had chased a big-bottomed country belle into a haystack with his camera. When Zhang walked in, his eyes lowered, the room went absolutely silent. What he has is not charisma, exactly, but gravitas. The next minute everyone was deep into a debate about technical problems. Zhang was very precise, very thorough, encouraging discussion but always in control. Then came the time to choose the location. Two minutes in, long before the haystack scene, Zhang killed the tape: "OK, next one. I don't think this place looks right." The cameraman looked relieved: he knew Zhang wouldn't have been amused when the video cam left the gorgeous location in pursuit of the gorgeous girl.

While Zhang has the gravity of a dark, collapsed star, the suave and articulate Chen Kaige is commanding in another way. Born a Mandarin and schooled for command, Chen is one of those whose specialness is never in doubt, who gains authority simply by taking it for granted. He takes seriously, perhaps too seriously, the responsibilities that come with power and privilege, since he takes his achievements to be the achievements of his culture. Even at film school, Chen had a reputation for erudition and eloquence, someone given to reading hard books and discussing large issues. On the basketball court, he played the lead, getting all the attention while Zhang, as substitute, shuffled along the sidelines waiting silently for his turn.

For all their differences in personality and family background, however, the two share something important: the Cultural Revolution. More than anything else, this is what prevented Chen from becoming a spoiled urban dandy sheltered from real hardship and pain. Those were formative years, so much so that in 1989 he wrote a soul-searching memoir entitled *The Young Kaige* (since Kaige in Chinese means 'song of victory', the title can also be read as *Victory Songs of Youth*). In its way, it's a gem: sensitive, lyrical, bristling with insights. Chen's characteristic grand gestures are there ("To know myself is to know the world," he announces in the preface), but it transcends the platitudes through its intensely felt descriptions of his harrowing experiences.

The Cultural Revolution meant that in adolescence Chen would witness his parents' polit-

ical downfall, a reversal of fortune that culminated in a mass 'denunciation rally' where Chen shoved and yelled at his father. It meant watching his Red Guard classmates ransack his house and burn the family books. Chen's memoirs render both incidents in meticulous detail, and with a deep sense of guilt and sorrow. Equally moving is his description of his Manchu nanny's departure. The passage in which she strokes his hand and tells him that she has been through it all before, that even emperors had burned books, displays the laconic beauty of his prose at its most poignant.

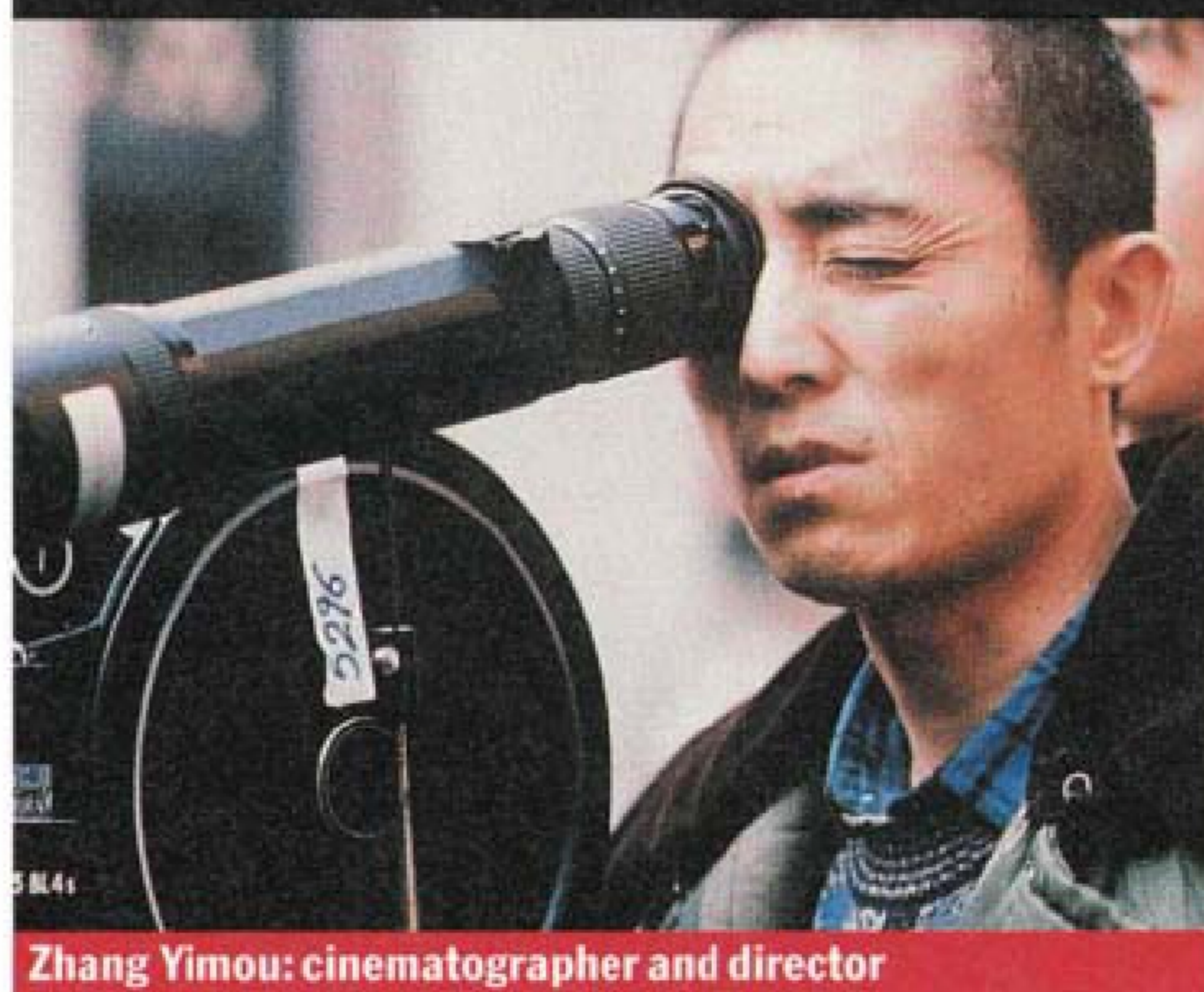
Chen has never made an autobiographical film in the manner, say, of Truffaut or Malle. And yet shadows of his Cultural Revolution experiences do fall on his *oeuvre*. Certainly that's the case with *King of the Children*, an allegory of the cultural constraints of the Maoist epoch. A more trenchant example, though, is *The Big Parade*, the only film Chen himself openly admits to be a failure ("not perfect," in his own words). The film tells of how ruthless training for a National Day military parade threatens to turn a platoon of PLA soldiers into brutal automatons. It's a powerful but by no means original vision, certainly not since Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, for instance. But for those who know him, the film is inescapably bound up with Chen's own experience as an infantryman.

Another consequence of the Cultural Revolution was that after middle school Chen was sent to a forest range in the remote south. There he was inducted into the army, on the merits of his height and basketball skills, to serve five years before returning to Beijing. Sometime in the 70s, Chen told me, he was sent with his troops to clamp down on a violent minority uprising in the south, where a whole town of armed rebels had taken to underground tunnels. In the midst of bloody fighting, one of the soldiers from Chen's brigade disappeared. On the final day of the operation, just when his comrades had given him up for dead, the missing soldier emerged with his bayonet. His eyes were glazed, his face gaunt, and before the comrades could embrace him, he began to empty out all the pockets of his tattered, blood-stained uniform – leaving on the ground a small pile of severed human ears.

The soldier told his comrades of how he got lost in the tunnels, and how, during the ensuing days, he butchered one after another of the rebels he encountered, making sure to save their ears for the body count. "The young man fairly gloated at the prospect of having his chest covered with medals and military honours," Chen told me with a shudder. His lingering sense of horror at the incident seemed to find cinematic expression in *The Big Parade*.

In a larger sense, the very mission of the Fifth Generation was an act of rebellion against the artistic strictures of Maoism. Indeed, whatever their individual merits, all of these were films that would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier. Under the four decades of communist rule, Chinese cinema had often seemed one long reel of propaganda. My generation of Chinese grew up with little more than two dozen revolutionary war movies, half of

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Zhang Yimou: cinematographer and director

them local products, the other half imported from brother socialist countries – the Soviet Union, North Korea, Albania. As a teenager I saw *Lenin in October* about ten times, and could recite half the lines from *Heroic Children*, a Chinese movie about the Korean War. Not until 1978, in my freshman year at Beijing University, did I see a film that offered no socialist uplift. It was an Indian movie – a romantic tear-jerker that for the first time had us all crying over something other than a revolution.

That was the year when the cultural thaw began. The Cultural Revolution officially ended in 1976, the year Mao died and a *coup d'état* led to the arrest of the Gang of Four. Just two years later – with the return to power of Deng Xiaoping and the watershed Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Conference, calling for "emancipating the mind" – political and cultural liberalisation were under way. The ensuing years were dubbed by some the "Beijing spring": outside official control there flourished poetry magazines and art exhibitions, even a new fictional genre known as "scar literature" which dealt with the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution. By the mid-80s, China's artists and intellectuals were caught up in something called the "culture craze", in which the concept of culture rather than ideology or politics was used to talk about China's history and heritage.

Surveying the successive classes of students who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy since its foundation in 1956, scholars had listed a total of four generations of Chinese film-makers up to 1980; the Fourth Generation included middle-aged directors emerging around 1980 whose works began to move away from the con-

straints of ideology. But the real departure in cinematic style came when Chen and his classmates burst on the scene. The rise of this Fifth Generation coincided with the culture craze and reflected its preoccupation with the true meaning of Chinese history and culture.

A preference for the grand gesture, the big picture, was also the result of the course of study this generation had gone through. Back then, in 1978-82, they had mostly watched and admired western European films. Chen has confessed that he didn't care much for Hollywood movies. And so, from the dusty back alley of China's post-Cultural Revolution wasteland, they peered into the glorious days of the high modernist European masters: Truffaut, Godard, Bergman, Antonioni, Bertolucci. Eisenstein and Kurosawa were up there too, though less central, as were a few Chinese efforts from the 30s and 40s. It wasn't a broad vision of twentieth-century cinema and in contemporary China there was no such thing as a well-rounded education. But in those hopeful years when China had just re-opened to the world, these students were the country's best and brightest. Armed with new equipment and heads full of innovative techniques, they shared a desire to reinvent Chinese cinema.

As soon as Chen landed his first project, he hired Zhang, who had majored in cinematography, as his director of photography. Chen, with his effortless sense of entitlement, was the natural leader of the pack, but he had early recognised the extraordinary abilities of his darker, more tightly wound classmate; for all their differences in temperament, talent would bond with talent. Fusing their ambitions, the two worked closely on *Yellow Earth*, gripped with the excitement of people doing something that hadn't been done before.

Besides, it was almost a dare. In the rigid Chinese studio system, they were considered far too young to be entering the game at this advanced level, which meant they were playing every moment to win. "It was like first love," Chen later remarked. "We were all so passionate." Zhang would recall that Chen talked incessantly during their long journey to northern Shaanxi, where the film was shot. Chen was fired up with ideas, thoughts, reflections, all quite grand and philosophical. "I just listened," Zhang later told one of his crew members, grinning. "Frankly, half the time I didn't understand a thing."

The film had a minimal storyline: a communist 'art worker' goes to a poor village to collect folk songs. But what made it a breakthrough was its captivating visual imagination, the way it made the natural landscape – earth, mountains, river – look alive, even sensual. The film inspired enthusiastic reviews in Europe and fervent debates at home. It was a work that made many in the west sit up and take notice: reviewers were amazed that this level of cinematic sophistication existed in China. Back home, most people didn't know what to make of it: the old guard saw something like a *monstre sacré* in its formative stage; the intellectual elite saw a monument of contemporary art. In its ►

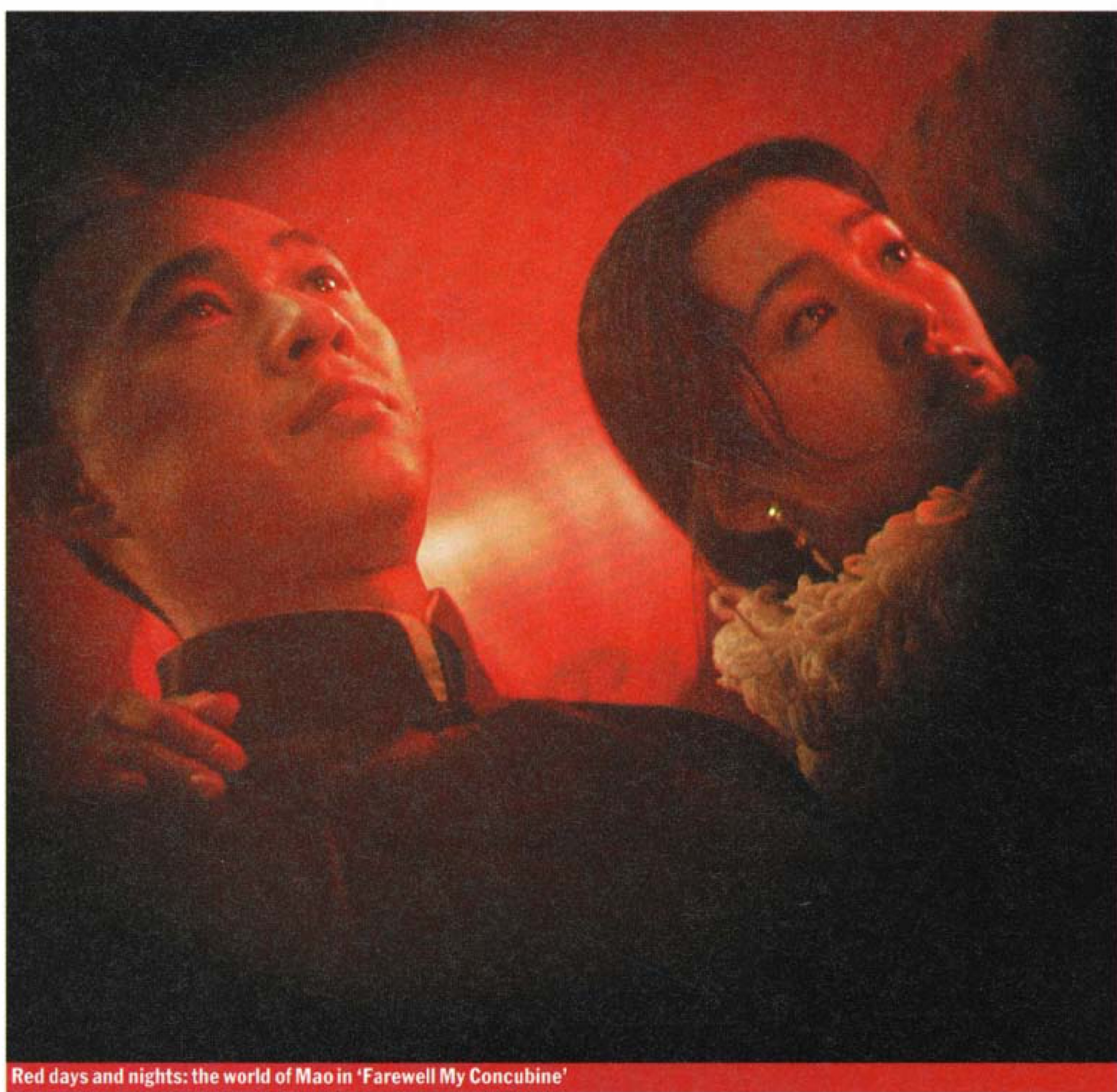
◀ way, *Yellow Earth* became an instant classic, collecting prizes in London, Hawaii, even one for cinematography in Beijing. It was to be the curtain raiser for China's new cinema.

A string of Fifth Generation films followed and new luminaries of film-making were heralded: Tian Zhuangzhuang, Zhang Junzhao, Zhang Yimou, all from the same school, indeed, the same class, with Chen Kaige leading the glittering parade. To follow their work was to watch a group of eager, audacious young men playing with lenses, lights, film stocks and filters, and discovering the cinematic pleasures of spectacle. If some of their films betrayed a hint of amateurishness, if many of them lacked absorbing drama, all of them *looked* gorgeous: such vibrant colours, such artful composition! And the youthful passion and seriousness of purpose with which they approached their weighty themes were touching even when not entirely engaging. Even their detractors had to admit that they were a refreshing change from the drab vistas and stale formulas of revolutionary cinema.

Meanwhile this artistic elite, basking in an increasingly open political environment, was growing impatient for outside recognition. "Go to the world!" was the slogan of the day, which generally meant also that the world should come to China and embrace its best: to wit, those artists and intellectuals who were promoting the slogan. In those days, when hundreds of thousands of people had taken to reading underground poetry and serious fiction, *qianwei* (a literal rendering of the French word *avant-garde*) represented not just art-house fare for a small elite, but a counter-culture with cachet: vanguardism, yes, but with a popular following. This was when the buzz had grown to the point where some Europeans were predicting a cinematic yellow peril. By 1988 the Rotterdam Film Festival had included Chen Kaige on its list of "20 directors of the future". As a rapturous Beijing film critic pointed out, the great Godard was on the same list, and his name came *after* Chen's.

Chen's relationship with Zhang Yimou changed irrevocably when Zhang made his debut as a director in 1987 with the film *Red Sorghum*. Few in China realised its implications at the time. Only much later, critics came to see that it was *Red Sorghum* that sounded the death knell of the Fifth Generation. It was still an art film, but it left the back door open a crack, and a star crept in: Gong Li. Her bold gait and her barely contained sexuality set her apart: she didn't swallow her sobs, she screamed and sang at the top of her lungs as she tumbled into the fire island of a sorghum field, and made it with a man she hardly knew. Sex had come to 'serious' Chinese cinema.

Next to *Red Sorghum*, the pallid suggestion of erotic tension in *Yellow Earth* seemed almost effete. From that point on, Zhang applied his ravishing cinematography to his favourite themes: sex, lies and violence. And power, of course, always power at the centre of everything: the male hierarchy, the old men squatting in shadowy corners certain that the last



Red days and nights: the world of Mao in 'Farewell My Concubine'

laugh will be theirs. Zhang painted his splendid colours across the screen and brought his camera to exotic locations, lingering on silky and supple figures. Being a good, conventional dramatist, moreover, he never let his storyline slacken. In China, Chen's *Yellow Earth* had inspired critical accolades and admiration; Zhang's *Red Sorghum* was filling the theatres.

Nor had Chen, working now without Zhang, been able to follow up his early success: *King of the Children* sank like a stone. But despite the uncertainties of his directorial career, Chen managed to retain his position as a symbol and spokesman in the heyday of the culture craze. So it was that with his well-groomed beard, black tie and white shirt starched stiff, Chen contemplated the world from the cover of *Eastern Chronicle*, a swanky magazine for the Beijing elite. The portrait, framed in a border of deep black, might have suggested an old issue of *GQ* until you read the caption inside, which came from Chen's notebook: "If culture can be seen as a rolling snowball, before you find out what this snowball really is, you say: 'Look! How big is our snowball!' That kind of pride is very blind. Only when you know clearly what is the culture you carry on your back and what you want to do with it, do you have the right to say that you are truly a man of culture."

Chen's lofty sentiments were heartfelt, and entirely in keeping with the mood of the moment. This was early 1989, the culture craze was now in full swing, and the oft-repeated imperative to 'think big' was giving many people headaches. Everybody who considered themselves an intellectual, which in China meant everyone with a college diploma, was

darkly introspective or trying their best to be, asking themselves the big questions of the day: what is culture, what is our duty to civilisation, what must we do about this great sinking ship called the Chinese nation? Chen Kaige had left for America by then, but because of his ambitious films and his international reputation as the maker of *Yellow Earth*, the media still considered him to have the iconic stature equal to the sacred mission China's elite had taken upon itself. A few months later, that mission collapsed at Tiananmen Square.

By the time I met Chen again in the autumn of 1989, in Manhattan, he had lost his beard and some of his aura of command. In his second year as a visiting fellow at New York University's film school, he had taken to wearing polo shirts and dark jackets; while he retained that touch of fastidiousness, almost primness, on the whole he looked like just another well-dressed foreigner in town. I had last seen him a year earlier; we had talked about his future projects and a screenplay I was asked to adapt from one of my novellas, which Zhang Nuanxin, a director and one of Chen's teachers at the Beijing Film Academy, was trying to make into a movie. Things had looked endlessly promising, for him and for the larger arts scene in China. A year later, as we sat eating jerk chicken and a vaguely exotic island salad in a Jamaican restaurant decorated like a giant jukebox, there was a feeling of life having come full circle. For our generation of writers and artists, the past few years had been a time of pressure and hectic glamour, of ferment and enormous possibility; it was a time of smashing forms and formulas, of being at the centre of something

larger than ourselves. Now the feeling had passed. When the bill came and Chen hastened to pull out his American Express card, all seemed, at least to me, to dwindle into comfortable ordinariness. We were just another pair of ex-pats with plastic.

But Chen was taking in America. Ensnared in a cosy Upper West Side apartment overlooking Central Park, he and his wife Hong Huang, who was working for a German company in New York, appeared to have found, or created, a mini yuppie haven. Elegant art books, copies of *Vogue* and various upmarket mail-order fashion catalogues were strewn about their living room. Guests of different colours, nationalities and accents flocked in and out; long rows of elegant shoes lined the doorway. Chen spoke half-apologetically about his own fascination with television commercials: "So many interesting shots." He was doing some work, too, shooting a rock video for Duran Duran and a short film called *A Maoist in New York*. His English was becoming more fluent; he'd even managed to get his immigration papers under way.

Film seldom entered the conversation and only much later would I hear of the money problems: fund raising in Europe and America was no easy task for an avant-garde Chinese director. What I remember most was Chen's emerging obsession with royalty and aristocracy. The only time I heard film-making mentioned was after he told his favourite story about the fall of Chongzhin, the last emperor of the Ming dynasty, and his futile effort to fend off the peasant rebels and the Manchu invaders. The treachery, the cowardice, the greed of the commoners – this was just the sort of epic tragedy Chen Kaige was born to paint across the big screen. "Emperor Chongzhin was a cultivated man, a wise ruler, but in the end he had to hang himself on a tree." He shook his head at the injustice of it all. "One day, when I have a lot of money," he said in a dreamy voice, "I will make it all into a big picture."

Chen came alive at these moments. On the other side of the world from Beijing, he told his fabulous tales about dead emperors, pored over fat books on European or Chinese monarchies and talked a good deal about the noble Manchu blood in his own veins. In 1990, the first time he met my husband, who also has some Manchu ancestry, Chen spent half the dinner conversation on the question of Manchu nobility. This invited merciless ribbing from Hong Huang ("Being from the gutter," said Hong, the granddaughter of an eminent mandarin scholar whom Mao held in high personal esteem, and daughter of Mao's translator, "I guess I married up.") But Chen pressed on with childlike oblivion: the subject was too important for him to be derailed by her wry asides. That dinner was the last time I saw Chen before he returned to China to shoot *Life on a String*.

For a film that opened in only a few theatres, *Life on a String* received an inordinate amount of badmouthing from Chinese intellectuals around the world – which signified, among other things, Chen's stature in the community.

Chen was shooting a rock video for Duran Duran and a short film called 'A Maoist in New York'



Masks and faces: 'Farewell My Concubine'

Everybody who had seen it – and some who had just heard it described – wanted to testify to how unbearable it was.

There was held to be something ridiculous about Chen's attempt to turn his central character, a blind folk musician, into a saviour of the universe by seating him over a mountain peak and having him sing to fighting clans. The idea was that the saint's style of singing (which someone memorably described as a cross between Cat Stevens and Beethoven) so moved the Chinese peasants that they stopped their petty squabbles. But audiences were not so moved: the consensus was that Chen's grandiose romanticism and lecture-mongering had got so out of hand that he would become the butt of universal mockery. The standard joke about the film was a pun on its Chinese title, which meant 'Sing As You Walk' and was now rhymed with 'Snooze As You Watch'. Even Chen's admirers covered their eyes.

Soon, though, most intellectuals would have far weightier matters concerning the sweeping changes taking place in Chinese society on their minds. During the three years after Tiananmen, the atmosphere in Beijing had gone from quiet gloom to resigned normality and then, by mid-1992, to a surge of activity. Under the cloud of political dishonour, the Chinese GNP had continued its rapid climb; the economy, as if pulled by a runaway train, was accelerating towards private sector prosperity. In the cultural realm, ideological education was out, elite sentiments were ignored, and ordinary people were clamouring for cultural goods long overdue: soft rock, kung fu videos, sitcoms and variety shows, tabloid newspapers

and karaoke bars. The government was pleased to acquiesce: if political liberties were still sharply curtailed, if much of the educated classes was hopelessly disaffected, why not placate the masses with night life and other harmless diversions? Most of the trends and many of the goods had been imported from Pacific-rim neighbours – principally Hong Kong and Taiwan, where the market was mature and the packaging slicker. Still, local pop artists were getting the hang of it – and they'd better, for in the hurried pursuit of money and merrier lifestyles, Deng's subjects were losing the stoic patience Mao's subjects once displayed.

This was also a time when the state film industry crumbled like the proverbial paper tiger. When Chen and his colleagues started their careers, money was not something to worry about. Their films, made with extravagant sets in often remote locations, were solidly backed by the official studios, however unsuccessful they were financially. The situation could not last. Trapped in a vicious cycle of bad films, bad politics and bad management, the big studios were going bankrupt in all but name. By the time the state monopoly started to loosen its grip over film markets, the audience for local movies had dropped off. The question "Who is your favourite movie star?" was most likely to elicit names like Sylvester Stallone or Nastassja Kinski. *Rambo* had been a national hit as early as the mid-80s, but since new western blockbusters were too costly to import, Hong Kong horror flicks and martial art schlock dominated moviegoers' fantasies. Responding to an apparently insatiable appetite for such fare, local theatres expanded their offerings: many now opened video projection rooms, cafés with cable television, special all-night shows with box-seats for lovers. On those occasions when there were only mainland-made movies to offer, some exhibitors would shut down the theatre completely, since they could only expect to lose money.

Caught in a state of institutional disarray, mainland film-makers scrambled to cope on their own, reeling in co-productions, where foreign donors or production companies typically provided most of the budget and assumed *de facto* control of production and of distribution outside China. Worst hit was the generation of film-makers who came after Chen and Zhang. By that time the state bank was depleted, but whereas the big names of the Fifth Generation had earned enough of a reputation to secure foreign funds, the new crop of upstarts was left to struggle in their shadow with little state support. Even for established names, the situation added new commercial pressures to winning international prizes: on top of what they did for the national psyche, they provided calculable marketing advantages, a seal of commercial viability.

Chen Kaige didn't like what he saw. Later he denounced it openly as an era of hopeless cultural decline, when idealism was mocked, refinement and elegance shoved aside, and vulgarity reigned supreme. He made it clear that it was an era to which he did not care to belong. The three years in New York had robbed him of his earlier self-assurance, along with some of ►

◀ the old camaraderie. “I’m in a pretty difficult position,” he admitted at the time in a dejected voice. “Sometimes I feel pretty helpless... I don’t know who I could talk to in China.” Approaching 40, Chen felt like an old soul. It must have been a hard time for him, his friends murmured: while nursing his wounds over yet another flop, while dealing with larger disappointments about China’s shifting cultural compass, he had to watch Zhang Yimou’s rocket-like ascent to international fame, accompanied by the boisterous touting of the popular Chinese media. With official censorship (*Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern* were initially banned in China, though both are available now) and sexual scandal providing an extra *frisson*, Zhang was emerging as one of China’s first superstars on the international scene. And Chen, some feared, was slowly disappearing into the man’s deepening shadow.

It was in this fraught cultural moment that fierce debates broke out, mostly within Chinese intellectual circles in and outside the mainland, over the meaning of Zhang Yimou’s popular success. Did he owe his popularity to the shrewd marketing of oriental exotica to the west? His films seemed so far removed from the lived experiences of contemporary China, yet were adorned with so many foreign prizes, that some suspected they were made with precisely that aim in mind. Thus the prominent dissident journalist Dai Qing, in a seething article on *Raise the Red Lantern*, cited one by one the movie’s “grating inauthenticities” in its depiction of ritual customs, and concluded that “this kind of film is really shot for the casual pleasures of foreigners.” She called on the Chinese audiences not to “close their eyes” to Zhang’s artistic dishonesty “just because they dislike the hard-liners in Beijing”.

It was a drastic turnabout. Soon the entire cinematic avant-garde was under attack. All these years, the Fifth Generation had been sent out to conquer the world, to plant Chinese flags over the cinematic map, and now, suddenly, they were getting hit from behind by the very critics who had once defended them from their enemies at home. *Today*, a Chinese exile magazine which had been the most famous underground *qianwei* magazine in Beijing a decade ago, launched the offensive in 1992 with a special volume on the new Chinese cinema filled with scathing essays about its aesthetic and moral failures. The Fifth Generation, once heralded as brilliant *enfants terribles*, were now to be unmasked as a group of overrated, callow and pretentious self-promoters.

Chen Kaige, whose name was identified with the rise of the Fifth Generation, was a prime target. His films, it was determined, portrayed the peasantry in a way that was both overly romanticised and essentially exploitative; his movies were sexist, narcissistic and sentimental; they exhibited a bad case of academic symbol-saturation; they were ponderous, heavy-handed, overly intellectualised; laden with the ideas of a half-baked philosopher. Chen himself, the critics agreed, had lost his head over a few condescending compliments from the Great White World. Some now recalled that what was so very impressive about

Chen’s first two features, *Yellow Earth* and *The Big Parade*, was Zhang’s camera work; take away Zhang’s contribution, they argued, and you would mostly be impressed by their flaws. Wasn’t that indeed the case with Chen’s movies since Zhang’s departure?

It was an accusation that could not but draw blood. In truth, the two film-makers had always been linked more by circumstances than by style or sensibility. Zhang has always been outcome-oriented and makes no apologies for being mindful of his audience. Chen has been more self-involved, charting thematic diagrams of his own metaphysical angst. When western film people ask Zhang which master has influenced him most, he likes to talk about Fei Mu, one of the few great Chinese film-makers of the 30s and a total unknown to the rest of the world. Chen has never hesitated to speak of his admiration for the cinema of European modernism. Both Zhang and Chen have a penchant for allegory, but within that mode, Chen was a romantic and Zhang a realist. Chen liked to ponder ideas; Zhang was a craftsman with little patience for philosophising. Zhang kept his distance, at least on the surface, from present-day China; Chen insisted on contemporary settings for his films. Even aside from the obvious contrasts in temperament and background, it was hard to imagine two more distinct approaches to film-making.

Until, in a curious way, Chen and Zhang traded places. Certainly Zhang surprised his audience with *The Story of Qiu Ju*. Using concealed cameras and documentary techniques, *The Story of Qiu Ju* is the first of Zhang’s films to be set in contemporary China, its rural setting rendered with exacting verisimilitude. “Pageantry,” as a disappointed American reviewer pointed out, “has dwindled into rote.” But most other reviewers admired Zhang’s brave stylistic departure and were taken with the film’s attempt to tackle the intricate issue of justice in today’s China. With this decidedly unexotic portrait of his country, Zhang has even regained a measure of respect from China’s elite, who applauded the appearance of the “genuine” Zhang. (Of course, the average Chinese moviegoer found all this business of noodle slurping and dialect mumbling a genuine nuisance. What’s the point of keeping Gong Li wrapped up in all those drab layers, they wondered? And before the point became clear, most of them had lost patience and sauntered out of the theatre.)

At the same time, Chen was heading off in the opposite direction: back into the glorious past of the Peking Opera. *Farewell My Concubine* starts in the 20s, detailing life in a Peking Opera training school. It progresses through the next two decades at a leisurely pace, and races through the Cultural Revolution in the final episodes.

Nobody knew exactly how Chen negotiated financing with the powerful Hong Kong producer Hsu Feng. A former movie star herself, Hsu is married to a businessman who owns concerns in both Taiwan and Hong Kong. They are just the kind of high-profile investors that

the mainland government, with its policy of economic pragmatism, is currently eager to court. Hsu made it clear that she was banking on Chen, “a major mainland director” to secure a major international prize as well as box-office success. After Hsu approached Chen about adapting *Farewell My Concubine*, a not-so-major novel by Lilian Lee, another Hong Kong woman, he remained undecided for a long time. (According to one report, Zhang had also been offered the property and had passed.)

When Chen finally said yes, the one thing he made publicly clear was that he wanted to add a section about the Cultural Revolution out of which he found the narrative lacking in weight. From that point on, the project rolled into high gear. Lee handed in a first draft and Chen set about rewriting it with Lu Wei, a Xian scriptwriter who has since helped adapt a novel for Zhang’s new movie. Weight was again found lacking in the role of the leading female, a saucy prostitute who would stir up trouble and tease out the sexual ambiguities between the two leading men; it would be beefed up. By then, everybody knew that the lead female role had gone to Gong Li. None other than John Lone, Bertolucci’s last emperor of China, was slated to play the male lead, but the deal fell through when Lone demanded what Hsu viewed as too much money up front. The part finally went to Leslie Cheung, a Hong Kong singer and movie icon and one of those versatile superstars in the East Asia pop scene. Cheung had taken up residence in Canada in semi-retirement, but he wanted the part so badly – he foresaw it to be the definitive role of his career – that he didn’t mind modest pay.

By Hollywood standards, a budget of 20 million Hong Kong dollars (about \$3 million) means a cheap production and a cheap cast. But if you are spending it on a Chinese set with a mostly Chinese crew, it can be enough to make you feel like an emperor. “When it comes to film-making, money is the bottom line,” Chen said to me after shooting. “It’s the lubricant that allows your ideas to flow.” But money also meant recognisable faces. Using established stars was something Chen, as a matter of principle, had avoided before *Farewell*. It had been part of the Fifth Generation’s ethos to insist on picking actors from an unknown, unspoiled talent pool and letting them blossom together with a young film-maker. Zhang Yimou broke the rule with his first feature: *Red Sorghum* starred Jiang Wen, the most famous male actor in China, and Zhang has continued to feature Gong Li in all his films. But for Chen, who had adhered to the Fifth Generation’s anti-celebrity ethos for so long, this departure looked a little like selling out. Some even took it as a sign of how far Chen’s fortunes had fallen: his position was so weak he had to ask Zhang’s leading lady for help.

Other controversies attended the production. For a while last year, rumours circulated in Beijing that *Farewell* would not get through the censors because it dealt with the taboo subject of homosexuality. This was a natural assumption in China, where at least until 1991 government clinics offered treatments such as ‘hate therapy’ and ‘electric therapy’ to ‘cure’

homosexuals. In 'hate therapy', the patient would be asked to think of flies or the skeletons of Aids patients whenever he experienced homosexual arousal. In 'electric therapy', the doctor would show a video of men having sex and then apply an electrified probe to the patient's erect penis, so that he would associate gay sex with painful shocks. Any form of 'kinky' sexuality seemed enough to make the members of China's officialdom cringe, a fact that became apparent with the banning of Zhang Yimou's two Oscar-nominated films. These two stories about the oppressive rule of old men were politically obnoxious, but what tipped the balance for the censors was the suggestion of incest and the decadent foreplay ritual of foot massage.

Later on, it seemed as if Chen himself had tiptoed around his taboo subject. After the film was shown in Hong Kong and was due to enter competition at Cannes, *China Daily*, a Beijing-based English-language newspaper, reported that Chen had cut out from the novel "the hints of homosexuality and stressed the descriptions of human feelings and frailties." Chen told the Hong Kong media that while he achieved a new understanding of homosexual love from his years in New York, it was not his movie's central subject – betrayal was. By then, to his relief, Chen had got the long-awaited yes from the Chinese censors, although the film, months after it premiered in Hong Kong, had still not opened on the mainland.

The Palme d'Or should have laid to rest any uncertainty over the three-hour film's fate. Chinese television announced the Cannes award without delay. This time, it looked as if the sense of national honour might overcome all obstacles. And Chen's handling of the taboo subject, for better or worse, has a quality of exquisite gentility rare in melodrama. It's a bit like watching an oriental masquerade ball. After seeing the film, a leading Chinese film critic turned to me with a look of perplexity: "What does this tell us about homosexuality, really?" Thinking of Yukio Mishima's novel *Confessions of a Mask*, I wondered whether Chen's film had less to do with confessions than with masks. Wasn't that the point about masks: the possibility that behind one you might just see another, and another, that maybe there isn't one true face? Perhaps by muting the homosexual theme, Chen wasn't simply skirting the real issue but was trying to limn a fluid psychological reality.

"And what about the Cultural Revolution?" the film critic pressed on. "We all went through it – does that part of the movie feel real to you?" A film director I met in Beijing was even more blunt: "The movie is totally false." He looked at me truculently, anticipating a challenge. Then he threw up his hands: "I'm happy for Chen Kaige, but if candy floss is the current vogue in Europe, where are the rest of us going to go?" He is one of the young Chinese directors making offbeat, low-budget films in a style best described as gritty urban realism: mean streets, cramped rooms, trapped, small characters – worlds away from the spectacle of Chen's latest. Among an even younger group of film-makers, the bold vision of the Fifth Generation, once so

Zhang Yimou: 'My works up to now have all been stylised art films, but this time it's going to be a mainstream movie'



Artful: Gong Li in 'Raise the Red Lantern'

fresh and startling, is already dismissed as so much cinematic fustian.

Perhaps the most revealing commentary on the film, however, comes from Chen himself. "To a great extent, I identify with Cheng Dieyi [Leslie Cheung's role]," Chen told me in Beijing just before he left for Cannes. "He's a great master of Peking Opera, but an idiot in life. He often confuses the real world with the world on the stage. Someone like him is very lonely as he goes on stage. But everything about him, including his jealousy, has the effect of a spectacle: it's very beautiful to watch him." I mentioned that some saw the film as a grandiose epic. "It's not an epic," Chen said emphatically. "It's a personal story about a few individuals."

And perhaps, for Chen, this is a personal story that has little to do with sexuality or the political history of the Cultural Revolution. At the centre of the picture is an unfolding duel between two men. Cheng Dieyi is portrayed as a consummate artist enduring almost inhuman pain and discipline, a man who suffers from confused identities and perpetual loneliness. He's a man who, driven by jealousy, ends up betraying the one he loves; and then for the ideal of high art slays himself, with his lover's sword, in the grand finale of a stage performance. Duan Xiaolou, his stage partner and also a great artist, is at first his close friend, and then betrays him by falling for a whore. But the greater betrayal lies ahead, when, as a performer, he acquiesces to the preferences of a coarsened age and becomes a conformist, betraying Cheng and their shared art in order to be accepted by the masses.

Of course, the story has many more twists

and turns, as a good, long melodrama should, but if we must pick out a central theme, then betrayal it is: an artist's betrayal of another, and one man's betrayal of art. All directors leave their own shadow and light on the screen, and Chen is no exception. Watching the film, I couldn't help noticing how Chen's camera caresses Cheng Dieyi, imbues every scene of the Peking Opera's heyday with the glow of nostalgia; the film is suffused with longing for a form of art so pure it could only end in the highest form of tragedy. Perhaps, then, the film can be seen as allegorising the partnership and rivalry of Chen and Zhang. Perhaps it represents the tensions within Chen himself.

When Chinese film people ask Zhang Yimou what he thinks of his other, less popular Fifth Generation colleagues, Zhang usually cuts them short. "Our cinema is still at a difficult phase of emergence," he says. "We should be generous to each other, instead of trashing people." For all the mystique of the Fifth Generation, he insists his generation has no big talent. In interviews Zhang tends to come across as someone with a rough, simple grace, like a kind of heavyweight champion who can poke fun at his own cumbersome bulk.

One breezy April evening last year, I went to a crew meeting Zhang was holding about his new film in progress. Gong Li was in Hong Kong; everyone in the suite was male except for me, an observer. Hotel Xiyuan is a plush Beijing establishment, filled with elegant boutiques, cafés, restaurants and hotel guests dressed in cosmopolitan styles, though of a recognisably Asian cut. Zhang was living there at the time, and I imagined it must be a good place for a famous workaholic to hide out: he didn't have to step out for anything or worry about being mobbed. "My works up to now have all been stylised art films," Zhang said, discussing his plans. "But this time it's going to be a mainstream movie." Around midnight, with Zhang reminding everyone that they must set out early next morning on a field trip outside Beijing, someone brought up *Farewell My Concubine*. "It's easier to watch than Chen's other films," someone commented drily. Zhang listened for a moment, then took over the subject. "Usually, Kaige's pictures are made of many pauses," he said, deadpan, "so you can get a clear view and think. With *Farewell*, it's like this" – now Zhang stepped sideways across the room like a monkey, his hands crossing in rhythm, his face coming alive with a succession of startling expressions. "Step, step, stop; step, step, stop. The pauses are still there, but it does move ahead a bit in between." Then just as abruptly, Zhang was back in his seat, his face blank, his mind locked into unknown thoughts, while the room was convulsed with laughter. The mimicry was funny – and a marvellously concise illustration of film narrative.

Perhaps at last, Chen, the *zhelidaoyan*, the philosophical director, had told a story in a manner that would engage a larger audience. But in China as elsewhere, popular success often comes at the expense of critical ►

◀ approval. “Zhang is a well-packaged cultural star, whereas Chen is a more serious filmmaker,” a Chinese critic sympathetic to Chen once told me. “Chen has a broader range of knowledge and interests to work with, but it’s up to him to blend them together smoothly.” After seeing their new films this year, the critic pronounced his verdict: “Now, Zhang is a fake peasant, Chen is a fake mandarin.”

Many Chinese critics and film-makers prefer nowadays to discuss Hou Hsiao-Hsien, the prominent Taiwan director whose *A City of Sadness* won the 1989 top prize at Venice. In *Today’s* special film volume, authors were as hostile towards the Fifth Generation as they were reverent about Hou. They loved his long shots, his deceptively simple characters; they thought his films captured the spirit of classical Chinese poetry. Hou was, in short, the *real* Chinese master, doing something the Fifth Generation tried to simulate with style. Hou’s new film, *The Puppet Master*, received the same kind of response from American reviewers such as Vincent Canby and Dave Kehr, both of whom found it brilliantly innovative. But there are plenty of people, both in Taiwan and in the west, who find Hou’s films too rambling. Competing with *Farewell* at Cannes, *The Puppet Master* won the Special Jury’s Award.

In our pre-Cannes conversation, I ask Chen what he thinks of the accusation of “catering to western tastes”. For a split second his face freezes; then, using a set Chinese phrase, he replies: “You know, when you talk standing up, it doesn’t hurt your back.” In other words, it’s easy for someone to talk who isn’t in my position. After a while, he works around to the sort of concessions he feels are necessary: “You cannot dig too deeply into Chinese issues, or foreigners won’t understand. Even in Hong Kong and Taiwan they won’t get it.” He says he has high esteem for Zhang Daqian, a great Chinese painter famous for his chameleon styles. “A true master, I think, should be a master of change.” I mention Hou Hsiao-Hsien. In glacial tones, Chen says: “He won’t change, of course. He’s a national treasure in Taiwan.”

That balmy spring afternoon, in my mother’s apartment on the east side of Beijing, we ramble on about many things. I ask Chen if he had planned to settle back in Beijing permanently when he left New York. He shakes his head gently. I know he and his wife have been living in a hotel for the past few years, and are now separated. The hotel is one of those ‘modern’, almost posh Beijing hotels, a sprawling grey compound occupied largely by foreigners. “How does it feel to live in a hotel in your own home town?” I ask. Chen shakes his head again: he doesn’t recommend it.

Chen’s beeper sounds many times in the course of the afternoon. The calls come mostly from his lawyer. Chen is embroiled in a libel suit against a Beijing reporter. The case is symptomatic of the present media atmosphere: it’s hard to tell fact from fiction, since fact checking is minimal, and in the pursuit of lively copy, reporters have taken to launching sensationalised attacks on chosen celebrities. There

are many things China has never had before that are now present in overabundance: the celebrity libel suit is one of them. This year, it seems, every star is suing some reporter.

By dinner time, though, Chen tells me that a settlement has been reached, out of court. We decide not to go out. What with business booming, constant construction, and a sudden flood of new cars, the city’s traffic jams have run amok in the past six months. At this rate, some experts predict, it will be as awful as Bangkok or Taipei in five years.

“I’m turning into a royalist,” Chen tells me as we sit down to eat. “China could not have been a great unified nation but for the imperial powers and Confucius. Chinese people always need an object of worship, an emperor sitting at the top. Without it, chaos is bound to break out.” I think back to many previous conversations, but even more to Bertolucci’s *The Last Emperor*. When the Italian master was weaving his grand oriental fantasy inside the Forbidden City in 1987, Chen had been on the set, transfixed by scenes of pomp and the recreated grandeur of China’s royal past. When the deposed emperor is feeling isolated and restless inside the Forbidden City and wants to venture out into the republican world, it is Chen who, dressed in full Manchu colours, sword in hand, rushes to have the palace gate blocked. It is Chen who kneels before the young emperor, silently entreating His Majesty to abide by the rules of the monarchy.

The intervening years, it is clear, have only heightened Chen’s sense that China’s redemption will lie in its ancestral traditions. He quotes the words of a Taiwanese friend: “I hope one day Chinese will be both wealthy and in love with *li*.” *Li* is the central Confucian concept, referring to a whole set of civil codes, rituals and social hierarchy. “It’s going to take time,” he assures me, “but I’m convinced China will formulate a Confucian type of culture.” The concept makes me uneasy; I think of my many radical-turned-neo-conservative Chinese friends, of the fiercely nationalist sentiments that have been warming up alongside a heated economy. Yet the days and nights of red terror and hooligan anarchy during the Cultural Revolution are burned in my memory, as they are in the memories of a whole generation of my friends. Many of us were once fervent Red Guards, joyfully destroying everything we were taught to consider remnants of a feudal culture. Chen’s talk of neo-Confucianism unsettles me, but I find it hard to reproach him. His nostalgia seems to stem from a terrible need, an elegiac yearning for an identity that an entire nation, he fears, may have lost.

I look him over: black polo shirt, soft grey sports jacket, black leather shoes. It’s all there, the cosmopolitan style, the casual, understated elegance; and yet there is an unspoken tension. It’s like the English words that leap out occasionally from his conversational flow. Yes, they’re meant to emphasise shades of meaning, but they also suggest the other side of Chen’s anxious cosmopolitanism: a measure of alienation from the culture that both nurtured and rebuffed him.

In a sense, his dilemmas, his longings, have

been those of the Chinese elite. Once he had believed that it could all come together: an avant-garde cinema, an enlightened audience, his intellectual mission accomplished, and the world offering a standing ovation. Instead, he found himself abandoned by his intellectual supporters, and dependent on the largesse of a public he saw as coarse, fickle, undeterred in their materialism and uncomprehending of art. And the insecure, vacillating officialdom only confirmed his worst suspicions.

Bad news came in August: one week after *Farewell My Concubine* opened in Shanghai, the Chinese authorities abruptly banned it. Was it because of the homosexual theme, the Cultural Revolution, or the film’s tragic ending? As usual, the politburo, which was rumoured to have screened the film, didn’t think it owed anybody an explanation. Miramax, which was soon to release the film in Europe and America, expressed its disappointment. Chen told western reporters that he felt “hurt” when this kind of thing happened in his own country. But weeks later, after some “minor editing”, without any explanation, the ban was lifted just as abruptly as it had been imposed. Although tickets were expensive, audiences generally enjoyed the film. Chinese officials even went out of their way to organise some screenings. It was a “face issue”, the cynics say, because in August China was trying to look open to court the Olympics.

But in September the honour went to Sydney. And in October, when the Tokyo Film Festival showed two non-officially produced Chinese films, both containing “negative” portrayals of contemporary Chinese life, it proved to be one embarrassment too many. The Chinese delegation stormed out of the festival in protest, and the film bureau back home moved to tighten censorship on independent productions and taboo political subjects. Given the erratic character of Chinese cultural policy, some people are predicting that in the next ten years or so the best of Chinese cinema is likely to lead a glamorous exile life, finding its real home not in China, but in the west.

“It’s just a commercial film,” Chen Kaige told me pre-emptively when, a few months earlier, I first mentioned that I had seen *Farewell*. Was he worried that this film about artistic betrayal was itself a betrayal, or was he merely worried that I would think so? Certainly it isn’t the kind of pure avant-garde cinema that he hoped would be his enduring legacy. Even so, he is pleased at its success, and inclined to speak of it less defensively now.

I look at the grey streaks in his hair, the small wrinkles spreading around his eyes. He has grown older, his laughter shorter and less easy than I remember. But he also seems more composed, more confident, than he has for a long time. In a few days, a gold-plated trophy will restore him to his pride of place in Chinese cinema. But even tonight, as he heads back into the streets of Beijing, he has the air of the man who knows that the sacrifices and concessions he has made will have been worth it.

‘Farewell My Concubine’ is on selected release

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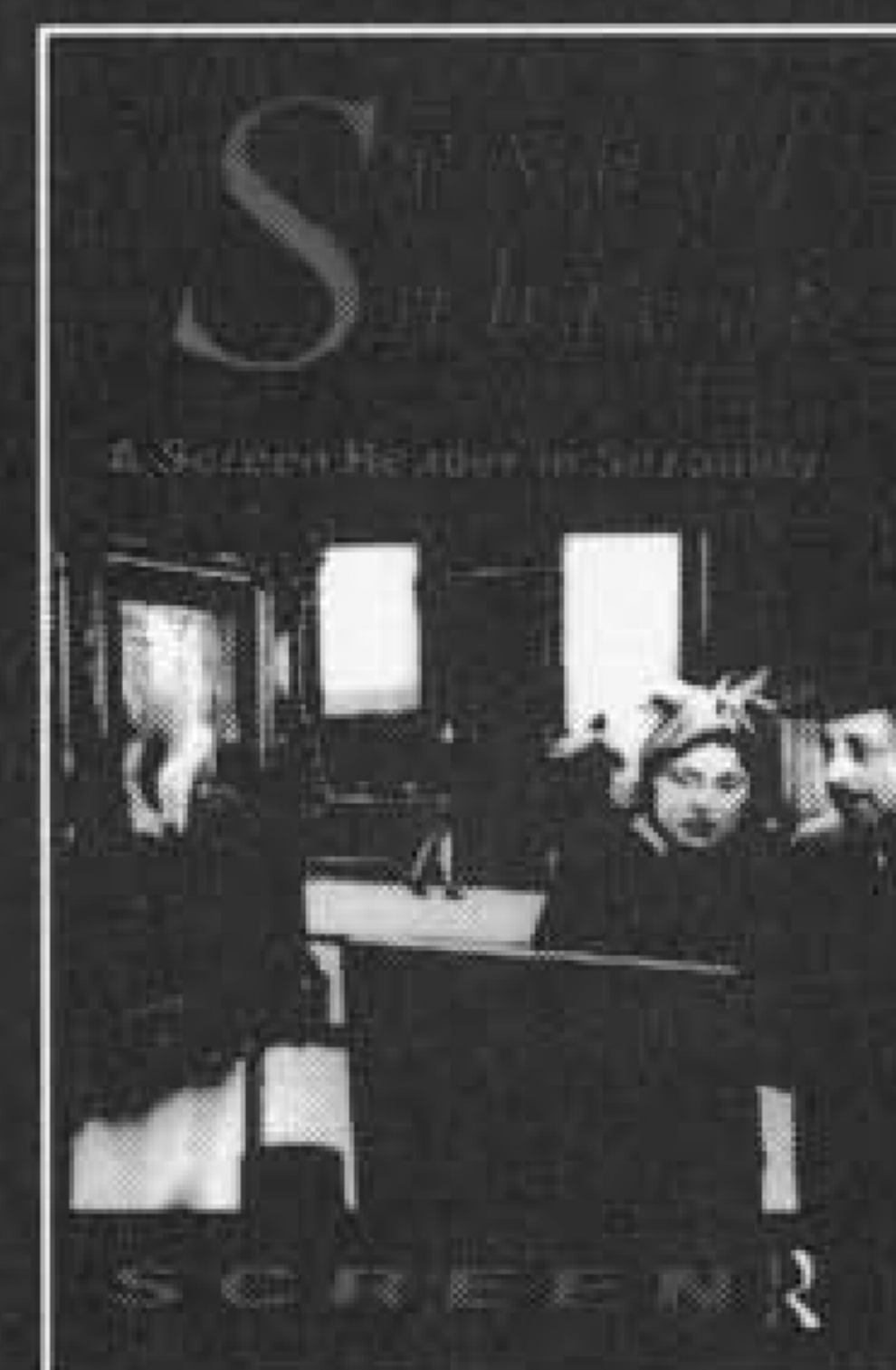
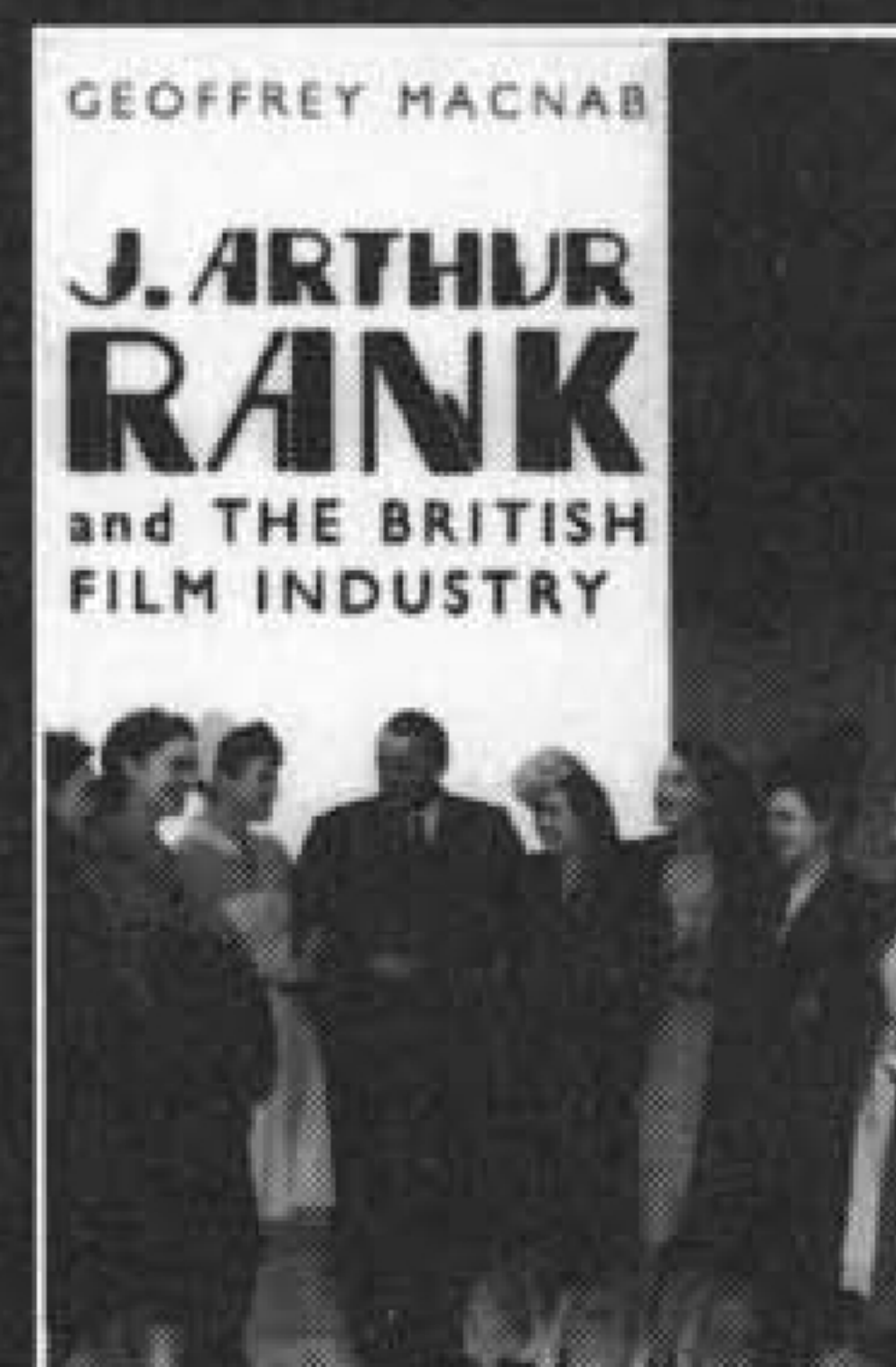
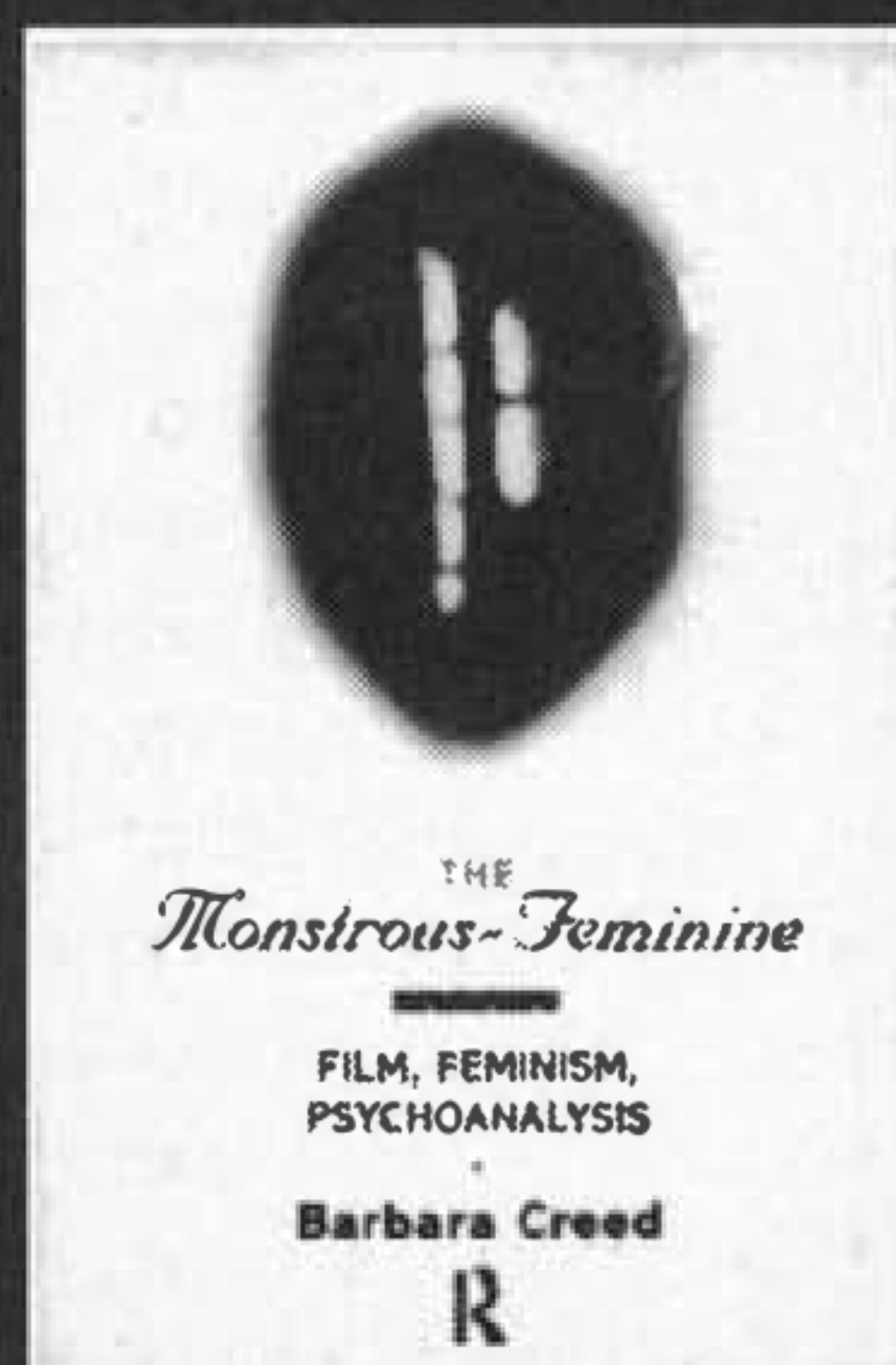
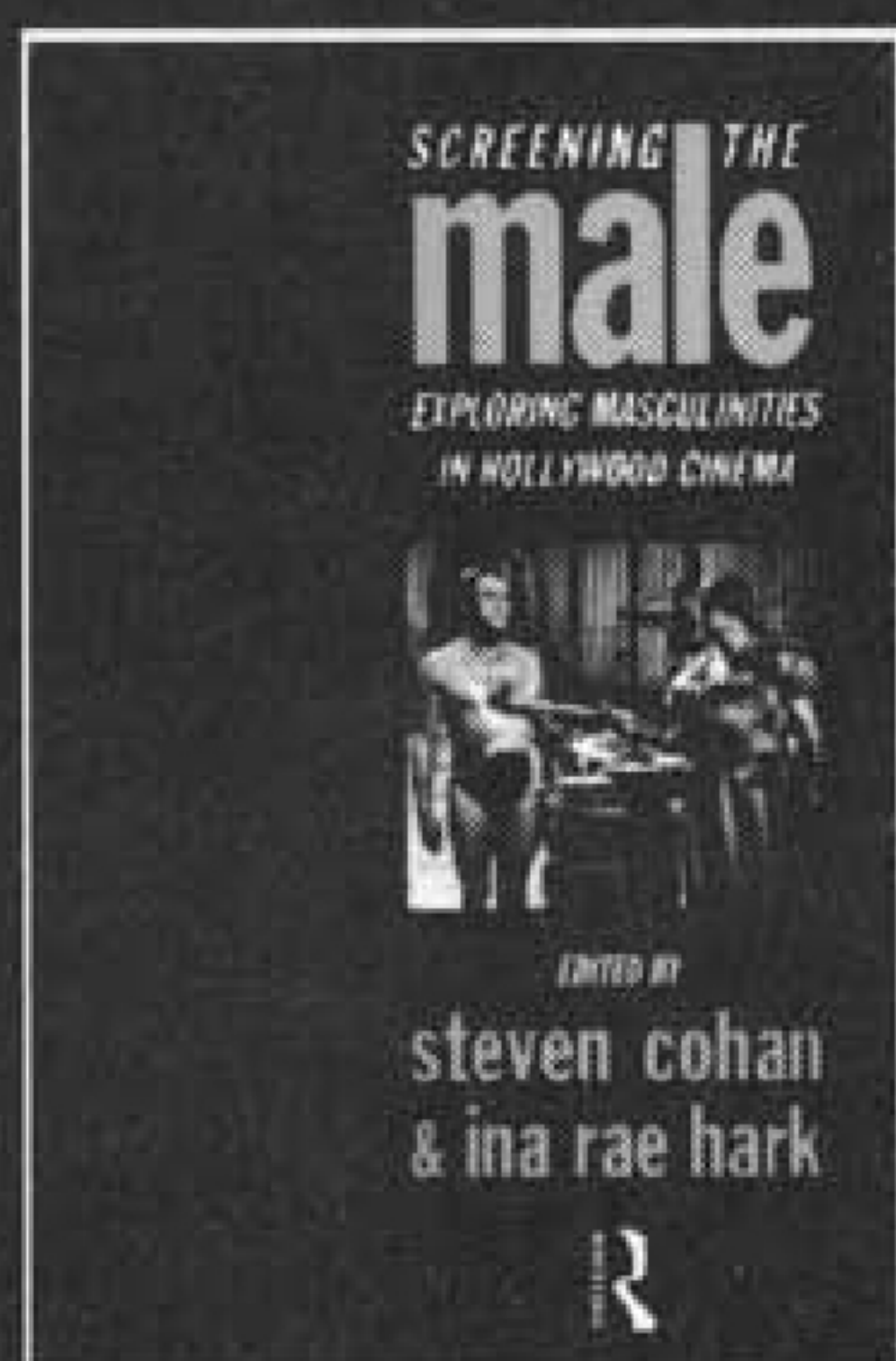
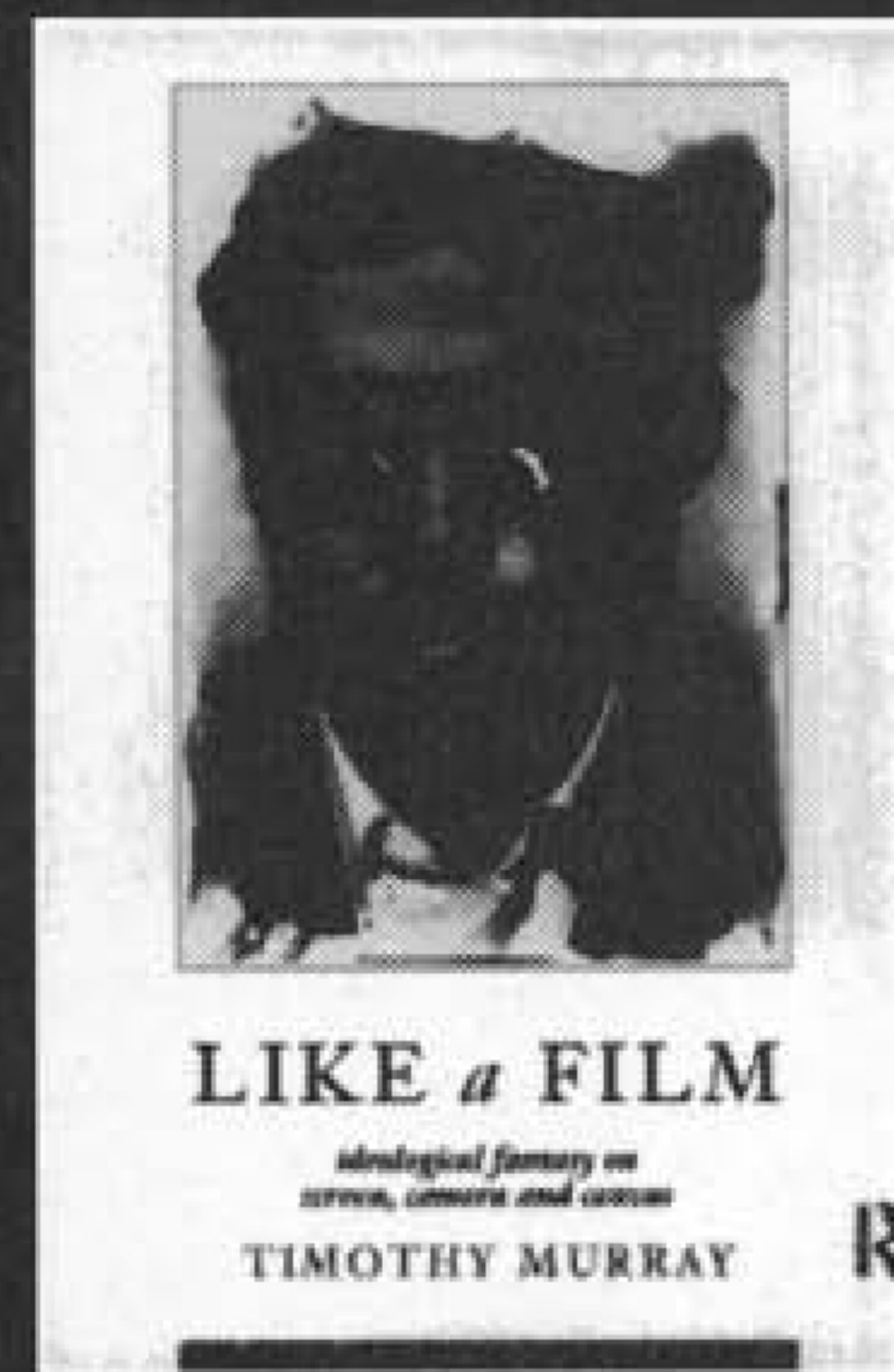
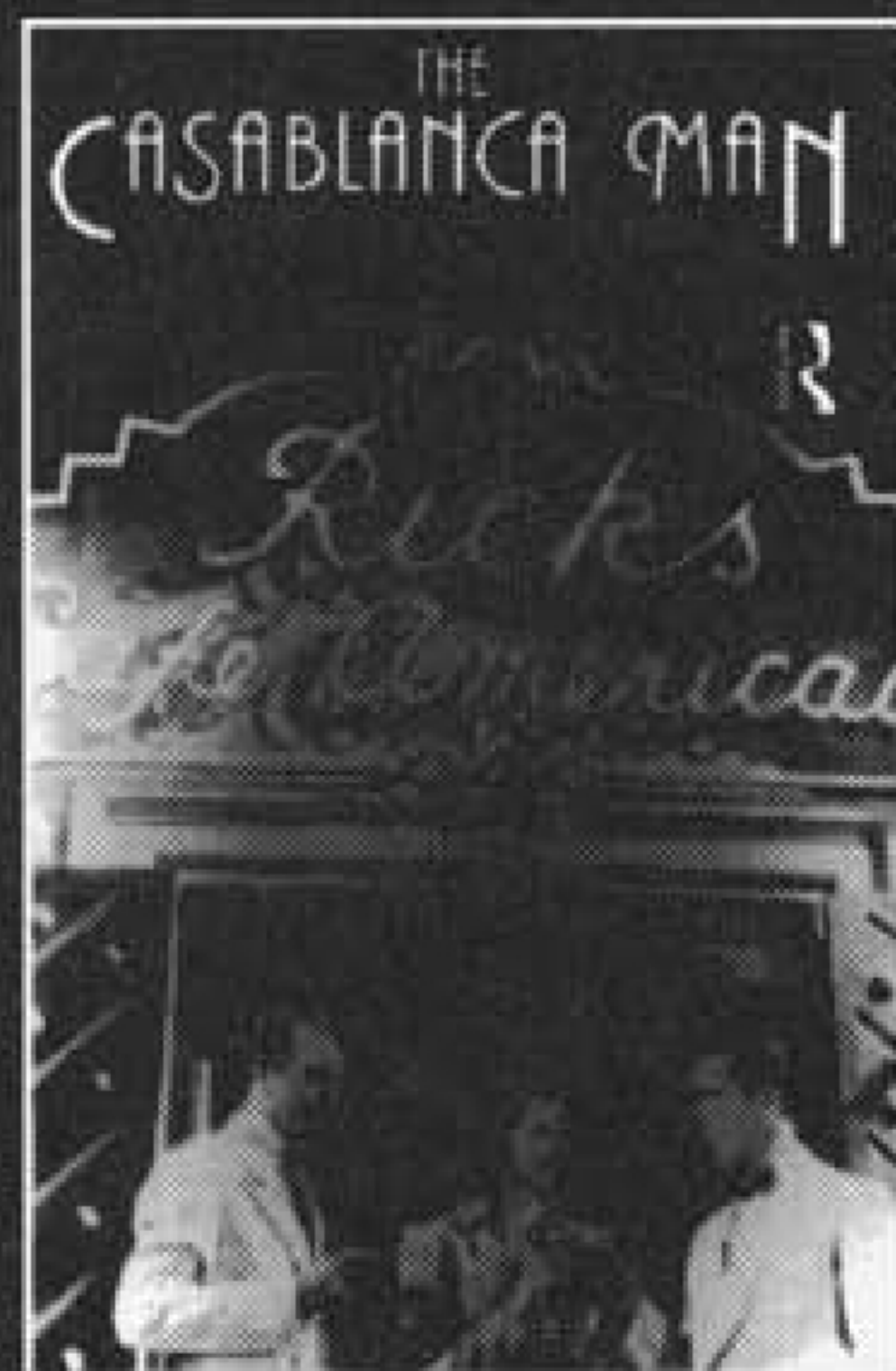
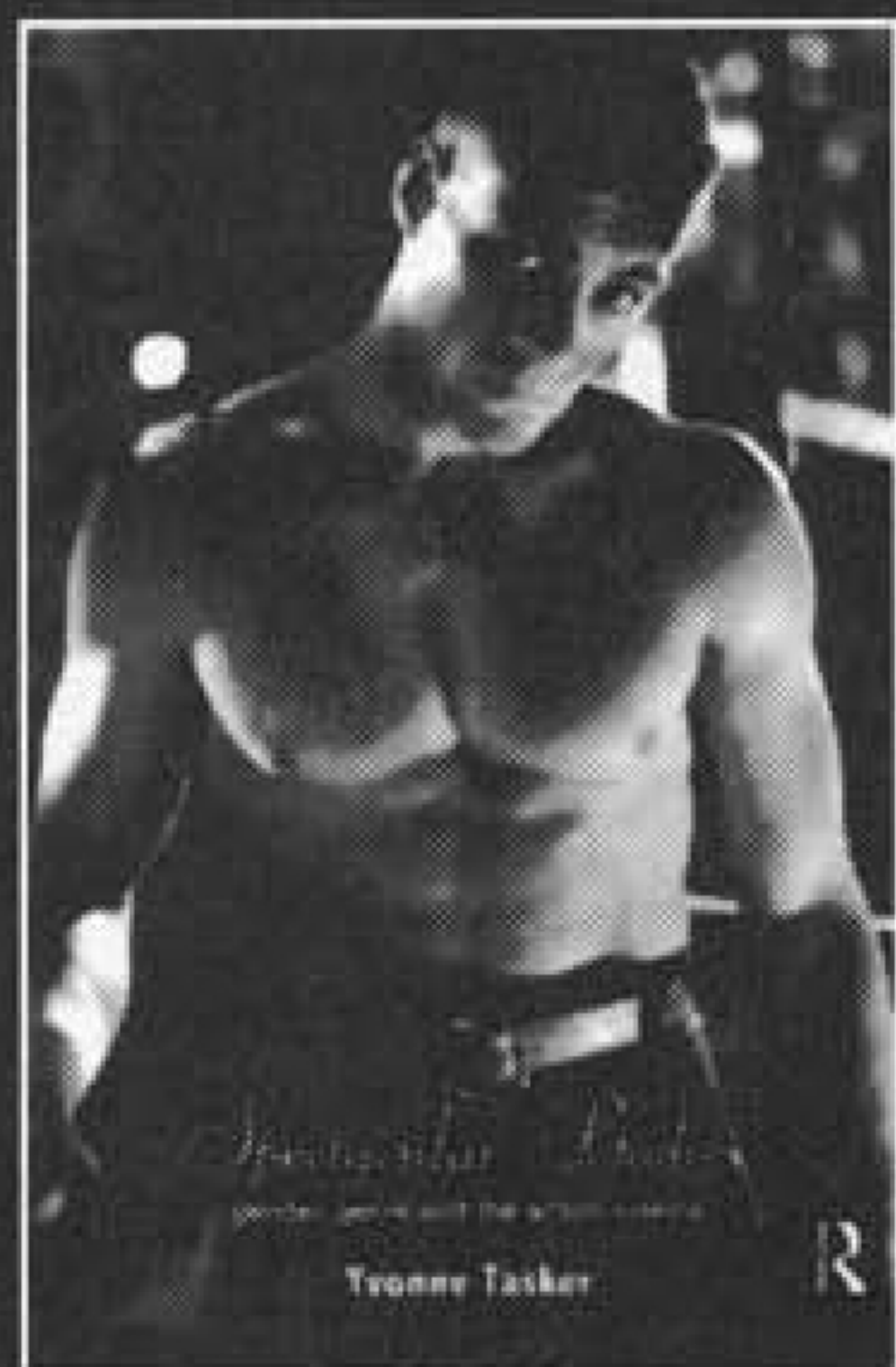
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Alexander Mackendrick

By Terence Davies

Audrey Hepburn, Federico Fellini, and now – most sadly of all – we have lost Alexander Mackendrick. One by one they are going – the marvellous people.

And they are not being replaced.

Indeed, they cannot be replaced.

And with them as they go goes all the old glamour of old Hollywood, goes the neo-realism of old Italy, goes the cosy comfort of cosy, comfortable Ealing.

Hepburn's smile – a mixture of the sophisticated, the gamine and the ravishingly vulnerable. Fellini's strongmen and clowns and Giulietta Masina's face, by turns pert then sad, and the ship that sails through fog past *Amarcord*.

And Mackendrick – Little Mandy Miller speaking at last... M- M- Man-dy, the string quintet serenading Mrs Wilberforce who remembers her birthday "in Pangbourne – all those years ago", reptilian Burt Lancaster chilling the blood of Tony Curtis (and our-

The marvellous people:
Alexander Mackendrick
(born 8 September 1912;
died 23 December 1993)

selves) with "Conjugate me a verb, Falco, to promise."

At each death the past recedes a little further, becomes a little more remote.

But – just see the films projected and the years fall away and, as fresh as the day that they were minted, the images and sounds caress or chill or move to tears or tickle the national funny bone.

It was hard to believe as we sat on the TV stage of the NFTS that we were in the presence of someone who had made all those famous films and who had directed all those famous people. For he was diffident and shy, but with a lovely dry sense of humour.

Student: What have you just been to see, Mr Mackendrick?

Mackendrick: A rough cut of *Madonna and Child*.

Student: It's a gay movie, isn't it?

Mackendrick: Not at the moment.

Hard to believe one was actually standing next to him in the lunch queue. (Three

courses for less than a pound.)

Hard to believe that he is gone.

But don't be sad.

For he will always be with us through the legacy of his films. And what a legacy.

Hunsecker, Falco, Mrs Lopsided, One Round, Professor Marcus who was proud of Herbert Lom's 'timbre', Mandy Miller, stiff Terence Morgan, Phyllis Calvert being brave and the wonderful Jack Hawkins with a voice like Brahms.

The films will last, last and shine. And we, the lucky ones, will sit in the dark and know all our old happiness as they weave their undeniable magic, their eternal spell.

As the lights go down and we hear the Boccherini or watch the jazz-filled night surrounding James Wong Howe's black and white New York, we will know that we are in the presence of a great film-maker and we will know that his name will not perish.

For all of us lucky enough to have met him will raise a silent glass and say "Here's looking at you kid."



Obituaries

Bob Baker

● **1992** Brenda Marshall, who died in July, deserves a mention for providing the romantic interludes in a clutch of wartime Warners (*The Sea Hawk*, *Background to Danger*). And in December: Raoul Ploquin, producer of work by Bresson, Duras; and Dianne Jackson, director/ animator, whose *The Snowman* is already a seasonal classic.

● **January** Rudolf Nureyev, who also acted a little; Tom Clarke, award-laden TV writer (*Stocker's Copper*, *Mad Jack*); Sammy Cahn, lyricist, collaborating with Jule Styne, Harry Warren and often associated with Sinatra; Audrey Hepburn; Joseph Anthony, stage-oriented director, with a few Hollywood stopovers; Aben Kandel, scriptwriter, blacklisted from Hollywood (*Dinner at Eight*) to Britain (*The Horrors of the Black Museum*).

● **February** Ishiro (or Inoshiro) Honda, whose stars (*Godzilla*, *Mothra*, *Varan*, et al) laid waste Tokyo on a regular basis; François Reichenbach, magpie documentarist; Joseph L. Mankiewicz; Sidney (Lord) Bernstein, managing director of the Granada cinema chain in the 30s, producer for Hitchcock in the 40s, founder of Granada Television in the 50s; Douglas Heyes, workhorse TV director, from *Maverick* to *McCloud*; Amos Guttman, Israeli film-maker, usually addressing gay issues; Ted Haworth, art director (*Strangers on a Train*), production designer (*Cross of Iron*); Leslie Norman, Ealing reliable, as producer (*The Cruel Sea*) and director (*Dunkirk*); Lillian Gish; Franco Brusati, director (*Pane e cioccolata*, *Dimenticare Venezia*).

Ruby Keeler (born 25 August 1909) We had been watching some clips from the movies she had made with the dance director-choreographer/showman Busby Berkeley for Warner Bros in the early sound period. So had she. "It's amazing. I couldn't act. I had that terrible singing voice," said Ruby Keeler. "And now I can see I wasn't the greatest tap dancer in the world either."

Talking to the audience, she showed much more charm than she ever had on screen. Her stardom has always seemed a bit of a mystery, even if achieved on Broadway while she was still in her teens. Perhaps Budd Schulberg got it right: "On stage, so the boys tell me, even in the scantiest, she carried herself with an air of aloof respectability which had the actual effect of an intense aphrodisiac" – a remark which takes on further meanings when we know that she was partying with gangsters before marrying, at 19, the bisexual Al Jolson, the biggest star of the era.

Jolson's popularity on stage had been dwarfed by his success in the first talkies – though constant repetition of themes and plots had dimmed it by the time his studio, Warners, signed Keeler in 1932. That they were not teamed on screen until three years later, when his career was faltering, shows both a lack of enterprise and an enslavement to type-casting, for she was always the dear little thing who attracts happy-go-lucky Dick Powell.

Keeler and Powell are not, in my opinion, the ideal team that Warners thought them.

She always looked as if she would respond to anyone who brought her in out of the rain, while he had difficulty being even game – understandably, for he must have been the squarest of crooners, as we know from Joan Blondell's novel *Center Door Fancy*, a thinly disguised account of her marriage to him. Around these smug young lovers were some of the most knowing players of the time – Blondell herself, Cagney, Aline MacMahon, Bebe Daniels, Ginger Rogers, Una Merkel and Warren William.

Just as Shirley Temple's limitations were shown up by Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland, so the advent of Alice Faye revealed that Keeler was not the most entrancing star of musicals. She left Warners without regrets on either side in 1937, and turned up briefly at RKO the following year. She made a B for Columbia in 1941, and it is doubtful whether anyone noticed.

Yet when the great Warner musicals began to be revived – and the best, surely, are the first four: *42nd Street* (1932), *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *Footlight Parade* (1933) and *Dames* (1934) – we could see the important contribution made by Powell and Keeler, singing ninnies in the midst of people so much more interesting, enterprising and dynamic than they. And you can't help liking them because of that. *David Shipman*

Eddie Constantine (born 29 October 1917) was brought up in Los Angeles, but his career was almost entirely European. His debut was as a singer, and he shared with Yves Montand the distinction of having been Edith Piaf's protégé and lover. Having failed to make his mark in this branch of show business, he turned to the movies, appearing as special agent Lemmy Caution in Bernard Borderie's parodic adaptation of Peter Cheyney's novel *La Môme vert-de-gris* (1953). This was LA on the Med, with the gangsters and molls transported for the occasion to North Africa, which remained (but not for long) the hunting ground of *mauvais garçons* in the *Pépé le Moko* tradition. Despite, or perhaps because of, the ludicrous plot and even more ludicrous script, Constantine turned in a superb performance as the wise-cracking FBI agent who proves so irresistible to women that even the gangster's moll turns over her lover. This was a *tour de force* in the annals of French cinema of the 50s, where more buttoned-up male stars were the norm, and it mattered not one jot that Constantine's French was sometimes approximate or that a special jargon had to be invented to cope with his calembours.

Constantine made four more films to exploit this new character: *Les Femmes s'en balancent* (1954), *Ces Dames préfèrent la mambo* (1957), *Comment qu'elle est* (1960) and *A toi de faire, Mignonne* (1963). As the titles indicate, they pursue the same plot – in which Caution takes time off as a ladies' man to solve the odd mystery that baffles the local constabulary. With their imperturbable good humour they are, as Jean-Pierre Jeancolas has pointed out, the true successors to the *Fantomas* series.

Constantine also diversified into other hard-boiled adaptations and spin-offs, par-



Ruby Keeler



Eddie Constantine

ticularly as Nick Carter, whom he first embodied in Decoin's *Nick Carter va tout casser* (1964). But his career was relaunched by the *nouvelle vague*, who were much impressed by his style of acting. Indeed, Belmondo's performance in *A bout de souffle* arguably owes as much to Constantine as it does to Bogart. British viewers will be most familiar with Constantine's role as the sympathetic American in Godard's *Alphaville* (1965), the transatlantic envoy who gets to wake the robotised Anna Karina with a kiss (a Godard self-portrait, perhaps?), but he also had small roles in the silent film sequence in Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* and in her *Lion's Love*.

The events of 1968 probably did for Constantine in France, but he continued to work in Britain (*The Long Good Friday*, 1979 and *Flight to Berlin*, 1983) and in Germany (*The Third Generation*, 1979, and his last part as an American general in Lars von Trier's thriller *Europa*, 1991). Though essentially a cult figure, his lasting contribution to French cinema will have been to revolutionise styles of acting, moving French actors away from a theatre-based approach to a style which calls more on the physical resources of the body, and helping to reconcile French filmgoers to imports from the United States. *Jill Forbes*

● **March** Joyce Carey, a favourite player of Noël Coward on stage and screen, the woman behind the tea urn in *Brief Encounter's* waiting room; Paul D. Zimmerman, scriptwriter (*The King of Comedy*); Harper Goff, resourceful art director, from *Captain Blood* to *Fantastic Voyage*; Richard Sale, versatile writer (*Suddenly*) and director (*7 Waves Away*); Cyril Collard, auteur of the one-off *Les Nuits fauves*; Herschel Daugherty, dialogue director in the 40s, grinder-out of episodic television in the 50s; Wells Root, scriptwriter for Hawks (*Tiger Shark*) and Sirk (*Magnificent Obsession*); Bob Crosby, band-leader brother of Bing, with a brief cinematic vogue during the Second World War; Michael Kanin, scriptwriter (*Woman of the Year*, *A Double Life*), husband/collaborator of Fay Kanin, brother of Garson; Larz Bourne, cartoon story-man, originator of Deputy Dawg; Chishu Ryu, Ozu regular, the perennial father, patient and resigned; Helen Hayes, leading light on Broadway, who also enjoyed a fitful screen career; George Gervarentz, prolific composer/songwriter, often associated with Charles Aznavour; Brandon Lee, whose brief career shadowed that of his father Bruce.

● **April** Alexandre Mnouchkine, producer of films by Cocteau, Resnais, Rohmer; Dieter Plage, leading wildlife cameraman; Gladys Lehman, whose numerous scripts included several for neglected comedian Reginald Denny; Arleen Whelan, euphoniously named redhead, caught by Ford at the start of her career (*Young Mr. Lincoln*) and at its close (*The Sun Shines Bright*); Leslie Charteris, creator of *The Saint*; Cantinflas, moon-faced Mexican comic, a superstar in Spanish-language territories, but whose Hollywood venture *Pepe* performed ignominiously elsewhere; Charles Oakley, president of Scottish Film Council, then i/c Edinburgh Film Festi-

val, author of lively history *Where We Came In*; Michael Gordon, director of heavyweight Broadway adaptations who spent the 50s on the blacklist then returned as director of *Pillow Talk*; Cy Howard, top TV comedy writer/director, whose *Lovers and Other Strangers* seemed briefly promising; Cedric Messina, prestigious BBC drama producer from the 60s.

● **May** Ann Todd, fire and ice blonde, star of three films for husband David Lean; Dorothy B. Hughes, novelist (*Ride the Pink Horse*, *In a Lonely Place*); Mary Philbin, silent heroine, notably of the Chaney *The Phantom of the Opera*; Richard Murphy, top scriptwriter at Fox (*Boomerang!*, *Compulsion*); Penelope Gilliatt, who scripted *Sunday*, *Bloody Sunday*; Ronald D. Haver, film historian; Robert Lapoujade, quirky French animator; Rani, Pakistani star, often directed by her husband Hassan Tariq; Jack Priestley, lighting cameraman (*No Way to Treat a Lady*, *Where's Poppa?*); Serge Leroy, director (*Attention les enfants regardent*, *Le Quatrième Pouvoir*); Roger MacDougall, scriptwriter at Ealing (*The Foreman Went to France*, *The Man in the White Suit*); Richard MacDonald, production designer on the majority of Losey's post-Hollywood films; Janet Green, scriptwriter with a mixed bag of credits (*Victim*, *7 Women*); Stuart Marshall, British television film-maker (*Desire*, *Comrades in Arms*).

● **June** James Bridges, director of intermittent interest (*The Paper Chase*, *The China Syndrome*); Kazuo Kawakita-Shibata, second generation of Japan's leading film import/export concern; Alexis Smith, lively Warners contract star, later freelance in Losey's *Sleeping Tiger*, latterly in Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*; Bernard Bresslaw, comedian in the big and gormless mode, in TV's *The Army Game* and various *Carry Ons*; Ray Sharkey, aggressive character actor (*Willie and Phil*, *The Idolmaker*); Ken Hodges, lighting cameraman (*Desert Mice*, *Inadmissible Evidence*); Spanky McFarland, roly-poly favourite of the *Our Gang* series.

Victor Maddern Audiences watching British movies of the 50s did so and do so in the knowledge – comforting, irritating – that they would be unlikely to encounter many unfamiliar faces among the speaking parts. Victor Maddern owned one of the faces that ensured this was so. Within the cast-iron hierarchy of supporting players, Maddern belonged without possibility of remission deep among the lower orders. Middle-aged from his early 20s, with a physique that bespoke generations of malnutrition, he must have been exactly categorised inside the casting directories of the time: salt-of-the-earth worker (aka scum-of-the-earth striker) or, in his service pictures, able seaman, trooper – loyal or mildly bolshie, as circumstances decreed. He fulfilled the condition of a successful typecast-ee by representing at once a generalisation and a specificity, the latter being the Maddern mouth, which had a tendency to slide, Stallone-like as it now seems, around the side of his face.

It's probably unnecessary to be precise about his roles. *Malta Story*, *Raising a Riot*, *I Was Monty's Double*, *Carve her Name with Pride*... Was he not to be found with spanner and blowlamp beneath the undercarriage of Squadron Leader Guinness' Spitfire, readying her for tomorrow's sortie, or filling the tank of Mr More's sports car, or driving Major Mills to Cairo HQ, or issuing secret

agent McKenna with her parachute? And even if he wasn't, those are the things he did some film else. An attendant prole, deferential, glad to be of use... Even in *Blood of the Vampire*, at first sight an exception, he eventually reverts to type when his killer hunchback (half a pingpong ball glued over his right eye) turns really useful by wiping out Doctor Donald von Wolfit for having evil designs on the unattainably lovely Barbara Shelley. Did any director, in a spirit of devilment, ever cast him as an officer, as a boss, as a judge? Did he ever receive his first screen kiss? No, not once, not ever. Private Maddern: dis-miss. Bob Baker

● **July** Eric L'Epine Smith, veteran talent scout, discoverer of Diana Dors; Fred Gwynne, sepulchral-voiced original on small screen (*The Munsters*) and big (*The Cotton Club*); Joe DeRita, last of the Stooges; Anne Shirley, child performer who renamed herself when starring in *Anne of Green Gables*, played the lead in a few minor Siodmasks and retired at 27; Kieran Hickey, leading Irish director (*The Faithful Departed*, *A Child's Voice*); Paul Sharits, avant-garde film-maker; David Brian, slippery snake in post-war Warner movies; Jean Negulesco; Mary Meerson, archivist at the Cinémathèque Française; Elmar Klos, co-director with Jan Kadar of seven features, notably *Shop on the High Street*; Donald Alexander, Scottish documentary maker, husband/collaborator of Budge Cooper; Marcel Oms, influential critic; Piero Heliczer, luminary of 60s New York underground scene; Francis Bouygues, whose company CiBy 2000 bankrolled work by Almodóvar, Lynch, Campion; Daniel Fuchs, scriptwriter (*Criss Cross*, *Storm Warning*); Kashiko Kawakita, pioneering east/west distributor, mother of Kazuko (see above); Jay Scott, Canadian critic.

● **August** Don Suddaby, the Yorkshire chemist in *Lorenzo's Oil*; James ("Madness! Madness!") Donald; Roy Budd, composer (*Soldier Blue*) much in demand in the 70s; Roy London, up and coming writer/director of TV (*The Larry Sanders Show*) and film (*Diary of a Hitman*); Ken Englund, comedy scriptwriter (*Rings on her Fingers*, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*); Phillip Martell, music director at Hammer Films; Francis Mankiewicz, Canadian-based director, son of Herman, nephew of Joseph L.; Stewart Granger; Irene Sharaff, costume designer; Don Getz, American independent distributor; Richard Jordan, purveyor of menace with a smile (*The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *The Yakuza*).

● **September** Herve Villechaize, dwarf player, cute (TV's *Fantasy Island*) or menacing (*The Man with the Golden Gun*); Claude Renoir, lighting cameraman, renowned for his work in colour and with his uncle Jean Renoir; Hall Bartlett, independent producer/director (*Zero Hour*, *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*); Raymond Burr, heavy (in every sense) transmuted by television into righters of wrong Perry Mason and Ironside; Christian Nyby, cutter, then director of sci-fi classic *The Thing*, at least according to the credits; Charles Lamont, director for 40 years of low-budget knockabout (Keaton and Langdon in their decline, Ma and Pa Kettle); Fernand Ledoux, Belgian-born actor (*La Bête humaine*, Welles' *The Trial*); Zita Johann, who enjoyed a few years of stardom in the 30s (*Tiger Shark*, *The Mummy*); Gordon Douglas, genre-hopping director of occasionally more than routine competence.

● **October** Cyril Cusack; John Bindon, East End hard case, off screen as well as on (*Poor Cow*, *Performance*); Leon Ames, head of the family in *Meet Me in St Louis*; Gwen Welles, Altman player who memorably essayed a couple of life's losers in *California Split* and *Nashville*; Leo Salkin, story-man, animator at MGM, Disney, UPA; Walter Newman, scriptwriter (*Ace in the Hole*, *Cat Ballou*); James Leo Herlihy, novelist (*All Fall Down*, *Midnight Cowboy*); Tonino Nardi, lighting cameraman for Bellocchio, Petri; Vincent Price; Masahiro Makino, prolific director, specialising in action movies; Cyril Coke, long-serving television director on series like *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *Duchess of Duke Street*; Federico Fellini; Elliot Scott, production designer (*The Haunting*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*).

River Phoenix (born 23 August 1970) When River Phoenix died aged 23 from a spectacular public overdose of heroin and cocaine on an LA sidewalk, the Hollywood star system struck again, revealing the contradictions between public image and private life. River Phoenix's parents were migrant missionary hippies who put their prodigious son to work in Hollywood at the age of seven. Following his first appearance in the well-received television movie, *Surviving*, Phoenix was snapped up by Joe Dante for the good-natured kids' film *Explorers* (1985). He was an exceptional untrained child actor, earning public acclaim for his role in Rob Reiner's surprise hit *Stand By Me*. Easing into adolescent parts, Phoenix excelled in Sidney Lumet's *Running on Empty*, a film that mirrored something of his unconventional upbringing with its story of activist parents dragging their son with them on the run.

At the time of his death, Phoenix was gearing up for an impressive adult career, with a work schedule that was fully booked until the year 2001 and famously included Neil Jordan's *Interview with a Vampire*. He had acted in 14 films between the ages of ten and 23; these movies may have been of variable quality, but Phoenix provides a point of obsessive visual interest in all of them. He was a beautiful, unsmooth teen-idol, but one who claimed to hate seeing his image on magazine covers, saying "I go into remission, shut myself out, and freak. I don't like being out there." He felt objectified by the media – "I'm a minute commodity" – although his sincere commitment to ecology and ranting interview technique endeared him to the press.

Phoenix's views on acting were serious-minded. He sought to represent human truth through a medium of artifice, and was preoccupied by this conundrum throughout his career. He defined himself as a character actor (not a star) and aspired towards the view of director Lawrence Kasdan (with whom he worked on *I Love You to Death*) that the best actors have at least half of their real selves in the role. Like *Stand By Me*, Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* was a turning point in Phoenix's life and work. He immersed himself, Method-style, in the role of Mike, the drug-snorting, emotionally abused 'lowlife' gay hustler. But Phoenix liked it, refusing to cross back over to the other side. 1992-93 seems to have been a deranged period in his delayed adolescence. A star is expected to be difficult and an artist temperamental, but junkies – like actors – are extremely good liars. It's not hard to imagine how drug abuse can be cov-



Victor Maddern



River Phoenix

ered over in Hollywood. Phoenix's advocacy of clean living in the post-*Idaho* publicity machine interviews makes sad and ironic reading: "It would really frighten the hell out of me to be a creature walking around, taking drugs. Why throw a curve on life?"

Cinematically, River Phoenix should be remembered for a number of films in which his intuitive, vulnerable and complex persona was used to considerable effect. These performances evidenced that we could have looked forward to a distinguished acting career. We've all lost out. *Jane Giles*

● **November** Georges Dancigers, partner with A. Mnouchkine (see above) in Films Ariane; Aidan Crawley, presenter/producer/executive, with ITV since its inception; Duncan Gibbins, British-born director of flashy Hollywood movies (*Fire with Fire*, *Eve of Destruction*); Mario Cecchi Gori, leading producer from the early 60s (work by Olmi, Scola, Fellini), latterly in partnership with son Vittorio; Jose Luis Guarner, author of numerous books on the cinema; Ely A. Landau, producer, mainly of transferred-to-film stage successes (*The Iceman Cometh*, *Galileo*); Stanley Myers, who scored much of Nicolas Roeg's output and whose 'Cavatina' was borrowed by Cimino for *The Deer Hunter*; Anna Sten, Russian player translated to Hollywood via a Goldwyn contract; Evelyn Venable, 30s starlet, model for one of Columbia's 'lady on a pedestal' logos, voice of the Fairy in *Pinocchio*; Eila Hershon, co-director with husband Roberto Guerra of 'portrait films' on Henri Langlois, Coco Chanel, etc.; Dorothy Revier, *femme fatale* of silents and early talkies, in films by Walsh, Dwan, Capra; Emile Ardolino, director of the 1987 sleeper *Dirty Dancing*; Richard Wordsworth, classical stage actor who portrayed the messily mutating consequence of *The Quatermass Experiment*; Hervé Bromberger, director of *Les Fruits sauvages* and various routine thrillers; Anthony Burgess, provider of a prehistoric vocabulary for *Quest for Fire*, of scripts for television mini-series and of source material for Stanley Kubrick; Kenneth Connor, whose death thins the *Carry On* ranks still further.

Gerald Thomas (born 10 December 1920) During the rehearsals for *Carry On Up the Khyber*, Kenneth Williams ruined the mood of an amorous scene with Joan Sims by loudly breaking wind. Chided by all and sundry, he defended himself with the claim that it used to happen to Rudolph Valentino all the time. "But they", replied director Gerald Thomas, "were silent films."

It was a line rather sharper than most of those in the finished film, or in the other 29 in the series, and it shows how in tune Thomas was with the carnivalesque cheek of the *Carry On* world view. Born in Hull and for a time a medical student (source, perhaps, of some of the endless boil and bedpan gags of the films?), he became an assistant editor at Denham Studios after the Second World War and worked for, among others, Carol Reed, Walt Disney and the Children's Film Foundation. It was, however, his partnership with producer Peter Rogers that ensured his place in the history of British popular culture.

Thomas and Rogers dabbled in television-derived thrillers (*Time Lock*, 1957) and pop star vehicles (the eminently resistible Tommy Steele in *The Duke Wore Jeans*, 1958), but it was the *Carry Ons* that made the



Myrna Loy

money, so that was where they stayed. A once- or twice-yearly celebration of vulgarity and bodily functions, a cackling refusal of any notion of cinema as an art form, a mountain of proof that the British have an insatiable appetite for toilet humour, the *Carry Ons* needed little direction in the personal vision sense of the term. Noted for his genial efficiency, Thomas' job was scarcely more than that of crowd control – but what a crowd.

It may be that the real energy and drive of the films came from the gloriously familiar turns of the performers, from the puns and ruderies of the scripts, or even from the hucksterish acumen of Rogers, but nonetheless Thomas' name capped the credits of all 30, from the gentle knock-about of *Sergeant and Teacher*, via the parodic triumphs of *Cleo* and *Up the Khyber* and the erratic likes of *Camping* and *Behind*, to the ill-advised but occasionally delightful *Columbus*. Given this, it's merely factual to state that he gave more pleasure to more audiences than Lindsay Anderson, Bill Douglas and Ken Loach all rolled together. *Andy Medhurst*

● **December** Frank Zappa, who also dabbled in film-making (*200 Motels*, *Baby Snakes*); Alexandre Trauner, art director extraordinaire; Don Ameche; Carlotta Monti, the 'me' of *W. C. Fields and Me*; Maroun Bagdadi, Lebanese film-maker, latterly based in Paris (*Hors la vie*, *La Fille de l'air*); Elvire Popescu, dizzy foreigner in pre-war films by Gance, Guitry, subsequently a favourite on the Paris stage; Janet Margolin, a beauty, sweet (*David and Lisa*) or sour (the killer in *Demme's Last Embrace*); Sam Wanamaker; Sylvia Bataille, Renoir heroine in *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, *Partie de campagne*; Jeff Morrow; Irving 'Swiftly' Lazar, superstar among agents, with a client list extending from Bogart to Neil Simon; Arthur Dreifuss, director of *The Quare Fellow*.

Myrna Loy (born 2 August 1905) As the female half of one of classic Hollywood's most popular and dashing on-screen married couples, Nick and Nora Charles of *The Thin Man* series, Myrna Loy earned herself the title of the movies' "perfect wife". So perfect that she was famously admired by the most popular couple off screen at the time, the Roosevelts. Franklin had a crush on her, while Eleanor became a good pal of the politically committed actress. Hard to believe, then,

that the perfect wife made her first credited screen appearance as one branch of a human chandelier in the 1925 MGM programme *Pretty Ladies* (Joan Crawford, still Lucille LeSueur, was another branch). But perfect wives have to start somewhere and Loy notched up for herself over 60 roles before Nora Charles came along.

This Montana-born girl with the freckled complexion and the hallmark up-turned nose at first found herself cast mostly as the exotic vamp (changing her surname from Williams to Loy added an orientalist mystique), shimmying through such silent films as *The Exquisite Sinner* (1926, Von Sternberg and Phil Rosen) and *So This Is Paris* (1926, Ernst Lubitsch). Popping up in the landmark talkie *The Jazz Singer* (1927, Alan Crosland), Loy made the leap to sound. But it was only with such films as *The Animal Kingdom* (1932, Edward H. Griffith) and Rouben Mamoulian's musical *Love Me Tonight* (1932) that her gift for comic repartee was made apparent.

Irving Thalberg had contracted her to MGM and the studio went in for the make-over routine. They cast her opposite her thin husband-to-be William Powell in the gangster picture *Manhattan Melodrama* (1934, W. S. Van Dyke), which earned some notoriety when John Dillinger came out of hiding to see it and was caught by the FBI. Van Dyke liked the spark between the film's leads, discerning them to be perfectly suited as Dashiell Hammett's sophisticated sparring partner sleuths. As Nora, Loy was indeed a daringly debonair wife for the times, drinking her husband under the table amongst other feats, but ultimately always by his side. Certainly Loy's Nora became something of a heroine in beauty magazines, where Loy advised on how to create her 'look'. There were even women who considered cosmetic surgery to achieve the same pert nose.

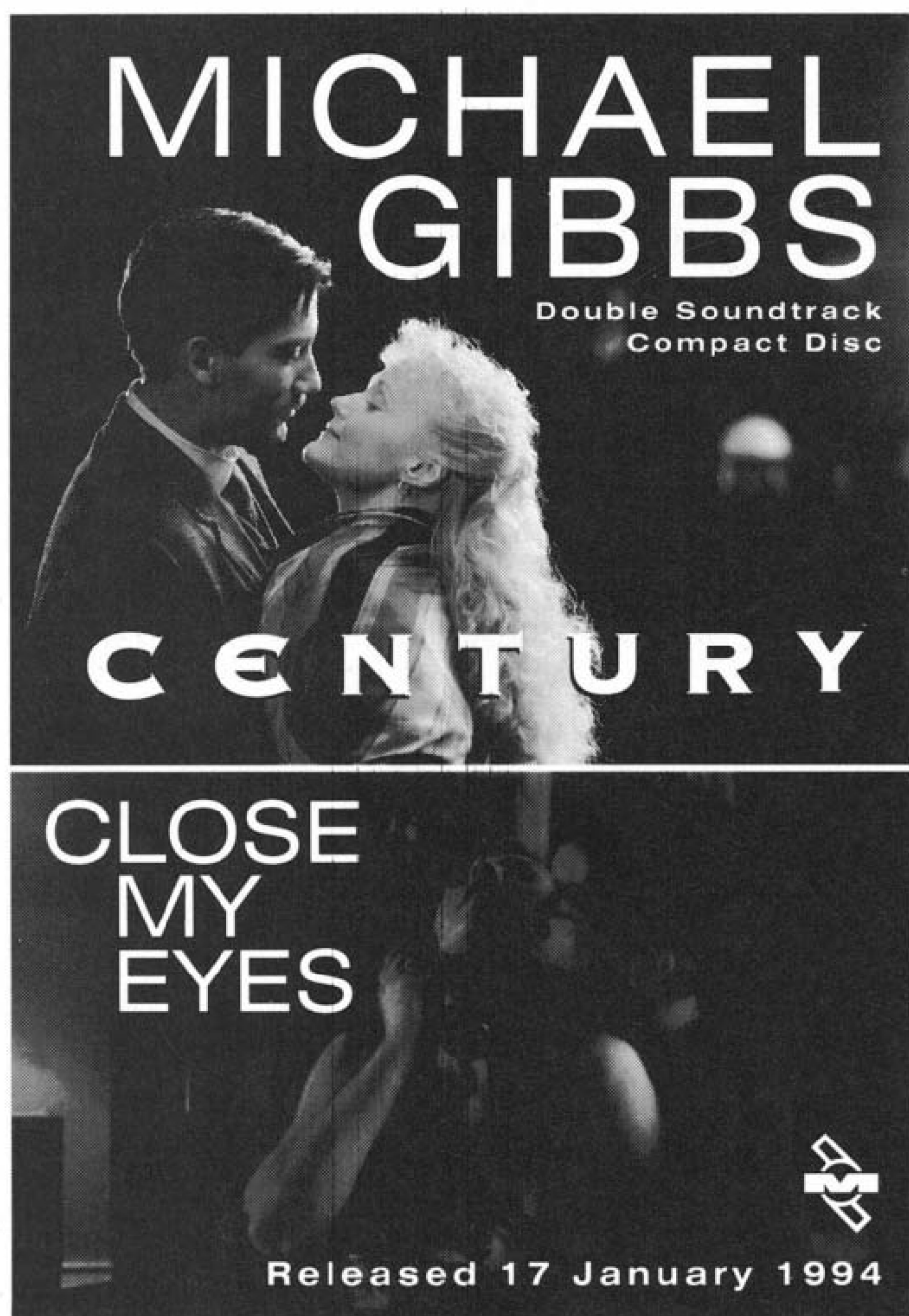
Loy herself might have made an equally interesting role model. She took indefinite leave from *The Thin Man* series and MGM in 1942 to work for the Red Cross. A staunch Democrat, she was a founder member of the Committee for the First Amendment and lobbied MGM to introduce integrated casting (without success). Meanwhile, her screen career went into a hiatus as she zealously followed her philanthropic and political convictions.

After the war she cropped up as another perfect wife, the stalwart Milly who stands by her G. I. husband (Frederick March) when he returns from the front in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946, William Wyler). Milly's noble stoicism marked a new era for perfect wives: less Martini cocktails than martyrdom. Though Loy proved to be a less tolerant spouse opposite Cary Grant in *Mr Blandings Builds His Dream House* (1948, H. C. Potter), Nora's glittering bravado was being replaced with more homely concerns, and Loy soon found herself cast as the perfect aunt or mother – whether to Doris Day in *Midnight Lace* (1960, David Miller) or to Paul Newman in *From the Terrace* (1960, Mark Robson).

As for the "perfect wife's" personal life, Loy went through four divorces. As she told one *New York Times* reporter: "Obviously in real life I wasn't very successful at it. They went out of their way to make me understanding and sympathetic on screen. Well, you just can't live up to that!" *Lizzie Francke*



Gerald Thomas



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Spiralling fear

The cinema of fear is my special interest. Since my first flickering nightmares, I have been drawn back to it like a moth to a flame. Like heroin, they say, "the first one is free" – and though it may make you sick, you could spend the rest of your life chasing that original high. I suppose that many things are like that, and for those of us who love film, going to the cinema is an effort to recapture those moments when we experienced what Alfred Hitchcock called "pure cinema". In my case, it may be called "being scared to death".

Most of the films I've made have tried to be scary, it being axiomatic that audiences want emotional punch for their box-office buck. But as the years go by, films don't seem to scare me any more, and the films I make generally end up being more shocking and bizarre than frightening. It has become quite an obsession of mine to catch and bottle that elusive essence that makes a film scary – and scary to *me*, someone who has studied this in depth and is not often surprised by the standard twists, turns and jumps of the horror genre. So I watched an old classic to see if it still had the stuff.

I had read Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* long before I saw Robert Wise's adaptation, *The Haunting*. Finishing the book at dusk, the palpable chill it induced stayed with me well past supper and into the night. I have always believed that great films must be based upon great writing (whether prose or screenplay) and *The Haunting*, which was adapted from Jackson's novel by Nelson Gidding, certainly seems to endorse that view. Having made films in which I have struggled through the whole of production (and sometimes post-production) to develop a half-prepared script into something approximating coherence, I well know the pitfalls.

A ghostly telling

In simple terms, *The Haunting* is a haunted house movie in which we never see the ghost. (This is in direct opposition to the established pattern of modern genre films. Perhaps as a result of all those frustrating 50s monster movies in which we waited for 90 minutes just to see the monster's face before the closing credits, the shockers of the last 20 years or so have been much more explicit.) Already more than familiar with the movie, I loaded up my laser disc player and settled back into the darkened room to watch Eleanor Vance meet her destiny. About half way through, the teacup at my elbow jumped off the table and fell to the floor. Without moving my eyes from the screen I registered my fright; I was definitely in a state of 'heightened spookiness'. "Wow!" I thought, "this picture is really getting to me, just like in the old days." Even when the cat was revealed to be the preternatural force behind the teacup's acrobatics, it didn't lessen my fright.

The Haunting had cast its eerie spell, and when it was over I quickly had to flip on the lights, so heavy was the air with a thick, weird potency. And this from a film I had seen many times, and of which I well knew the outcome. I knew there would be no visi-

Truly chilling films are rarely explicit. It's what is not shown that frightens, says director of 'Society' Brian Yuzna as he watches again Robert Wise's 'The Haunting'



The haunted and the haunting: the guilt-ridden Eleanor (Julie Harris)

ble monster, no gore or viscera, no action in the contemporary sense, only talking, voiceovers and languorous long takes. The most frightening scene, when Eleanor (Julie Harris) unknowingly holds the hand of the 'ghost' while cowering from the supernatural pounding on the bedroom door, is played exclusively upon Eleanor's reaction in medium shots and close-ups. *The Haunting* proves the old cliché that it's what you *don't* see that's scary. But there are other films that don't show you anything and they're not scary – just boring. What makes *The Haunting* work so well for me?

I love the way the film begins, an unabashed ghost story – a great ugly house in silhouette with a ghostly logo superimposed. Dr John Markway (Richard Johnson) provides the voiceover narration that introduces us to the history of the house, a history that is mild by cinema standards: no bloody hatchet murders, no catalogue of killings, only a couple of accidental deaths and a suicide. But the tone of the narrative is unambiguous: this is an evil house.

Robert Wise has a reputation as a 'mainstream' director, having achieved major successes in many genres, but apparently not stamping enough of his personality upon his films to be considered an auteur. Nor does *The Haunting* call attention to his direction. (Perhaps it would have been scarier still with a Polanski calling the shots – or probably it would just have been different.) Wise's method serves the material well, realising Shirley Jackson's circular tale with repeated images of implied dread, telling the ghost story in a way that depends less on the story and more on its ghostly telling. And that, I believe, is the crucial factor: what is frightening is the poetry of the words and images – rhythms and rhymes that carry the dreadful possibilities of the supernatural from the motion picture screen into the ether around us. The success of *The Haunting* is due in large part to Jackson's remarkable interweaving of madness, guilt and fear into the conventions of the haunted house tale. But how often good material loses its soul on the way to the screen. Credit is surely due to Nelson Gidding and Robert Wise for constructing a film which delivers the chills with a straightforward seriousness that, in spite of the inherent hokeyness of the haunted house structure, never once falls into foolishness or unintentional humour.

The opening montage is a ghostly little masterpiece on its own. The images are never shocking or showy, merely evocative, beautifully utilising distorting lenses and shadowy black and white photography. The culminating scene, in which we follow a nurse up Hill House's towering spiral staircase, carrying a coiled rope served on a silver platter, ends with her exiting from the top of the frame while we gaze down vertiginously towards the library floor below. Then, suddenly, her feet drop into frame with a snap, and swing slowly, lifelessly, above the chasm. This sparse story-telling style inspires a horror that other, more explicit screen deaths fail to achieve.

Serious supernatural investigator Dr

Markway's narration for this prologue now continues, his voiceover introducing us to one of his special guests at the haunted house: the guilt-ridden spinster Eleanor Vance. And here the film changes point of view completely. In a sequence reminiscent of Janet Leigh running away with the cash in *Psycho*, Eleanor 'steals' her car and drives off through the New England countryside towards Hill House. We are inside her mind now, and will remain so until the end of the film through the liberal use of voiceovers that express her innermost thoughts. Usually I am against voiceovers as a film narrative device, but here it works, partly because of Julie Harris' unsettling performance, largely because of the dreamlike quality of the monologues themselves, perhaps mostly because it is hard to imagine how else the story could be told. Maybe ghost stories just have to be spoken.

Our own inner madness

It is crucial that in the end we are left to interpret what makes Hill House haunted, and this may be why the film can play the genre straight, not tongue-in-cheek, and still be acceptable to a general audience. Ultimately Eleanor is both the haunted and the haunting, and it is her emotionally and psychologically unbalanced personality that is the scariest thing about the movie. The characters in the film are all affected by the haunting, but each in proportion to their own sensitivity to the non-physical world. Luke Sannerson (Russ Tamblyn) is interested in Hill House only as the real estate he stands to inherit, and thus only extreme supernatural activity can capture his attention; Dr Markway is a believer but looks at phenomena through his measuring devices, which ironically limit his experience; Greenwich Village clairvoyant Theodora (Claire Bloom) is sensitive enough to feel the haunting, but her worldly cynicism helps her share Eleanor's terror without succumbing to the evil.

Only Eleanor herself is guilt-ridden and lonely enough to be sensitive to the supernatural, and vulnerable enough to be completely sucked in. It is no surprise when Eleanor's madness predestines her to be consumed by Hill House, for we understand that this is how hauntings really work. It is all about sensitivity and vulnerability: those of us who are consumed with the struggles of the material world will find little empirical evidence of a supernatural evil; those of us who are sensitive to the immaterial sides of life are proportionately vulnerable to those malevolent forces.

This, I think, is why the fear established in *The Haunting* can magically transfer itself from the screen and into our world – because the logic of the film tells us that it is *our* madness and imagination that is the weak chink in the armour of our reality. When the poetry of cinematic words and images makes us susceptible and vulnerable, then it's time to turn on the lights, get something to munch on, pick up the newspaper, get back into the real world before our inner madness takes us where Eleanor has gone before.

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films

Addams Family Values

USA 1993

Director: Barry Sonnenfeld

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

Executive Producer

David Nicksay

Producer

Scott Rudin

Visual Effects Unit:

Robin Griffin

Associate Producer

Susan Ringo

Production Supervisor

Visual Effects Unit:

Jannie Brauns

Production Co-ordinators

Office:

Paula Benson-Hines

Visual Effects Unit:

Jody Levine

Unit Production Manager

D. Scott Easton

Location Manager

Karen White

Casting

David Rubin

Associate:

Debra Zane

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

Burt Harris

Mark McGann

Ian Woolf

Rebecca Strickland

Screenplay

Paul Rudnick

Based on the

characters created by

Charles Addams

Director of Photography

Donald Peterman

Visual Effects Unit:

Keith Peterman

In colour

Effects Photography

Visual Effects Unit:

Barbu Marian

Jim Aupperle

Optical Photography

David S. Williams Jnr

Matte Photography

Mark Sawicki

Camera Operator

David E. Diano

Video Playback

John Coldiron

Visual Effects Supervisor

Alan Munro

Associate Supervisor

Visual Effects Unit:

Brian Jochum

Digital/Optical Visual Effects

VCE:

Peter Kuran

Scott E. Forbes

Jeff Pepiot

Supervisor:

Kevin O'Neil

Optical Supervisor:

David Emerson

Digital Supervisor:

Brian Griffin

Animation:

Pam Vick

Ingin Kim

Craig Clark

Optical:

Todd Hall

Gary Martin

Lisa Mann

Visual Effects Unit:

Dave McCue

Greg Tagawa

Digital:

Kevin Kutchaver

Editorial:

Jo Martin

Effects Photography:

William Conner

Katsuyoshi Arita

Production

Co-ordinator:

Marilyn Nave

Matte Paintings

Illusion Arts:

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Matte Artist

Robert Stromberg

Stop Motion

Don Waller

Motion Control

Photography

Image G

Editors

Arthur Schmidt

Jim Miller

Production Designer

Ken Adam

Art Director

William J. Durrell Jnr

Set Decorator

Marvin March

Set Dresser

Tamara Clinard

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Kenneth D. Pepiot

Special Effects Supervisor

Albert Delgado

Special Effects

Foreperson:

Gintar Repecka

Gary L. Karas

Visual Effects Unit:

Robert Olmstead

Kelly Kerby

'Thing'/'Pubert' Puppets and Prosthetics

David B. Miller Studio

Special Prosthetics/

Mechanical Devices/

House Miniatures

Altertion Studios Inc

Music

Marc Shaiman

"The Addams Family

Theme" by Vic Mizzy

Orchestrations

Jeff Armajian

Brad Dechter

Hummie Mann

Michael Starobion

Music Supervisor

Ralph Sall

Music Editors

Scott Stambler

Nancy Fogarty

Songs

"Disgusting Crime

Theme" by and

performed by D. Brent

Nelson; "Sunrise,

Sunset" by Sheldon

Harnick, Jerry Bock;

"Its Your Thing" by

Rudolph Isley, Ronald

Isley, O'Kelly Isley,

performed by H-Town;

"The Camp Chippewa

Song" by Marc

Shaiman, Paul

Rudnick, Scott

Wittman; "Express

Yourself" by Charles

W. Wright,

Fu-Schnickens,

performed by Roger

and Fu-Schnickens;

"Happy Turkey Days",

"Eat Us" by Marc

Shaiman, Paul

Rudnick; "The Sound

of Music" by Richard

Rodgers, Oscar

Hammerstein II,

performed by Julie

Andrews; "Tomorrow"

by Martin Charnin,

Charles Strouse; "The

Brady Bunch" by Frank

Devol, Sherwood

Schwartz, performed

by the Brady Bunch;

"Indian Love Call"

by Rudolf Friml,

Otto Harbach,

Oscar Hammerstein II;

"Macho Man" by Henry

Belolo, Jacques Morali,

Victor Willis, Peter

Whitehead, performed

by Village People;

"Happy Birthday To

You" by Mildred J. Hill,

Patty S. Hill; "Addams

Family (Whoomp!)"

by Ralph Sall, Steve

(Roll'n) Gibson, Cecil

(DC) Glenn, performed

by Tag Team; "Family

Affair (Rap Version)

by Sylvester Stewart,

additional rap lyric by

Shabba Ranks, Errol

Dillon, Patra, performed

by Shabba Ranks,

Patra, Terri & Monica

Choreography

Tango:

Peter Anastos

Camp Chippewa:

Adam Shankman

Costume Design

Theoni V. Aldredge

Costume Supervisors

Linda Matthews

Visual Effects Unit:

Vallerie O'Brien

Make-up

Supervisor:

Kevin C. Haney

Artists:

Fern Buchner

Katherine James

Fred C. Blau

Cheri Minns

Gerald Quist

Visual Effects Unit:

Barry Koper

Hair Stylists

Supervisor:

Susan Germaine

Toni-Ann Walker

Kim Santantonio

Susan Schuler-Page

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editors

Joseph Ippolito

Elizabeth Sterner

Sound Supervisor

Cecelia Hall

Supervising ADR Editor

Juno J. Ellis

Supervising Foley Editor

Pamela Bentkowski

Sound Recordists

Peter Kurland

ADR:

Bob Baron

Music:

Tim Boyle

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Doug Greenfield

Sound Re-recordists

Robert J. Litt

Greg P. Russell

Frank A. Montano

Sound Effects Editors

Suhail Kafty

Steve Mann

Frank Howard

Noah Blough

Foley Artists

Sarah Jacobs

Robin Harlan

Visual Effects Unit

Consultant

Laura Buff

Stunt Co-ordinator

Gary Hymes

Cast

Angelica Huston

Morticia Addams

Raul Julia

Gomez Addams

Christopher Lloyd

Fester Addams

Joan Cusack

Debbie Jellinsky

Christina Ricci

Wednesday Addams

Carol Kane

Granny

Jimmy Workman

Pugsley Addams

Kaitlyn Hooper

Kristen Hooper

Pubert Addams

Carel Struycken

Lurch

David Krumholtz

Joel Glicker

Christopher Hart

Thing

Dana Ivey

Margaret

Peter Macnicol

Gary Granger

Christine Baranski

Becky Granger

Mercedes McNab

Amanda Buckman

Sam McMurray

Don Buckman

Harriet Sansom Harris

Ellen Buckman

Julie Halston

Mrs Glicker

Barry Sonnenfeld

Mr Glicker

Nathan Lane

Desk Sergeant

John Franklin

Cousin Itt

Charles Busch

Cousin Aphasia

Laura Esterman

Cousin Ophelia

Maureen Sue Levin

Flora Amor

Darlene Levin

Paura Amor

Carol Hankins

script by foretelling the suppression of the American Indians by the settlers and ordering her tribe to burn down the set and scalp Amanda. Debbie tries to blow up Fester in their home, but he is rescued by Thing, the family’s disembodied hand. She decides to murder the entire Addams family by electrocution, only to be thwarted and fried by the innocent intervention of Pubert. Fester is reconciled to the family, and takes a shine to Cousin Itt’s nanny Dementia.

As if in answer to criticism that *The Addams Family* was all one-off jokes with a negligible plot, the sequel calls upon the services of respected playwright Paul Rudnick and is weighted down by story contrivances. Though less strung up with the business of introducing its characters, *Addams Family Values* is even more indebted to the TV sitcom its makers try to distance themselves from. It resembles three half-hour episodes haphazardly spliced together, as it follows the stories of the new baby, the murderous nanny and Camp Chippewa. Raul Julia’s Gomez and Anjelica Huston’s Morticia take a relatively minor role in the stories, the plots serving as showcases for wholly wonderful performances by Joan Cusack, an insane pastel temptress who explains her path to madness with a slide show, and Christina Ricci, whose blank-faced strangeness is used to even better effect than in the first film. In the one moment that manages to be eerie and affecting as well as funny, Ricci’s Wednesday is forced to contort her face into a mawkish smile, eliciting not the expected sentimental ahhs but a child onlooker’s panicky cry of “she’s scaring me”.

While the Fester-Debbie plot is well introduced by Fester gloomily lying in bed reading *Strange Men and the Women Who Avoid Them*, Cusack’s kooky malevolence is ill-served by a succession of repetitive failed murder gags – although her dropping of a ghetto blaster into Fester’s bath pays off with a well-remembered classic TV image, as he holds a lit-up electric bulb in his mouth. The Camp Chippewa scenes offer far more meat for the film’s skewed values. The misfit Addamses – whose kind are seen in a somewhat too-blunt equation to include racial minorities and the handicapped – are opposed with pampered moppets who indulge in ‘group hugs’ and whose equivalent of the chain-gang sweatbox is a Wendy house with videos of *The Brady Bunch* and Disney films. *Addams Family Values* doesn’t really work as a film and is often over-obvious – the Pubert jokes are especially duff, with a notable bit of cleaning-up as Charles Addams’ great gag-line “Congratulations, it’s a baby” is amended to a feeble “it’s an Addams”. But the film at least has a consistent enough parade of one-liners and singleton gags to keep the laugh-per-minute ratio acceptably high. And Christina Ricci should get a film of her own.

Kim Newman

The Age of Innocence

USA 1993

Director: Martin Scorsese

Certificate

U

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Columbia Pictures

Producer

Barbara De Fina

Co-producer

Bruce S. Pustin

Associate Producer

Joseph Reidy

Production Co-ordinators

Alesandra M. Cuomo

Paris:

Joanny Carpentier

Unit Production Managers

Bruce S. Pustin

Paris:

Jean-Pierre Avice

Location Manager

Patricia Anne Doherty

Unit Location Manager

Paris:

Sandrine Ageorges

Casting

Ellen Lewis

Associate:

Julie A. Madison

Assistant Directors

Joseph Reidy

Joseph Burns

Susan Fiore

Paris:

Vincent Lascoumes

Screenplay

Jay Cocks

Martin Scorsese

Based on the novel

by Edith Wharton

Director of Photography

Michael Ballhaus

In colour

Super 35mm

prints by Technicolor

Camera Operator

David M. Dunlap

Steadicam Operators

Larry McConkey

Anastos Michos

Special Visual Effects

Illusion Arts:

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Matte Artist:

Robert Stromberg

Matte Photography:

Mark Sawicki

John Sullivan

Optical Photography:

David S. Williams Jnr

Mechanical Effects:

Lynn Ledgewood

Production Manager:

Catherine Sudolcan

Editor

Thelma Schoonmaker

Production Designer

Dante Ferretti

Art Directors

Speed Hopkins

Paris:

Jean-Michel Hugon

Art Department

Co-ordinator

Michele Giordano

Set Decorators

Robert J. Franco

Amy Marshall

Key Set Dresser

Dave Weinman

Chargeman Scenic Artist

James Sorice

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

John Ottesen

Special Effects Operators

Ronnie Ottesen

Mike Maggi

Music

Elmer Bernstein

Music Extracts

“Faust” by Charles F.

Gounod; “Piano Sonata

No.8 in C Minor, Op.13

(Pathétique)” by

Ludwig van Beethoven;

“Radetzky March”

by Johann Strauss I,

performed by the

Berlin Radio

Symphony Orchestra;

“Emperor Waltz

Op.437”, “Tales From

The Vienna Woods”

by Johann Strauss II,

performed by the

London Philharmonic;

“Artist’s Life” by Johann

Strauss II, performed

by Leonard Bernstein

and the New York

Philharmonic;

“Quintet in B Flat

Op.87, 3rd Movement”

by Felix Mendelssohn

Bartholdy, performed

by Academy Chamber

Ensemble; “Marble

Halls” arranged by

Enya, Roma Ryan,

Nicky Ryan, performed

by Enya

Orchestrations

Emilie Bernstein

Music Editors

Suzana Peric

Suki Buchman

Nineteenth Century Music

Consultant

David Montgomery

Costume Design

Gabriella Pescucci

Wardrobe Supervisors

Deirdre Nicola

Williams

Hartsell Taylor

Make-up

Allen Weisinger

Ronnie Specter

Special Effects Make-up

Manlio Rocchetti

Hair Design

Alan Dangerio

Hair Stylist

Michael Kriston

Hair Consultant

Antonio Soddu

Title Design

Elaine Bass

Saul Bass

Opticals

The Effects House

Supervising Sound Editor

Skip Lievsay

Dialogue Editors

Marissa Littlefield

Laura Civiello

Dialogue Supervisor

Philip Stockton

ADR Editor

Hal Levinsohn

Foley Supervisor

Bruce Pross

Foley Editors

Frank Kern

Steve Visscher

Sound Recordist

Tod Maitland

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Tom Fleischman

Sound Effects Editor

Eugene Gearty

Visual Research Consultant

Robin Standefer

Etiquette Consultant

Lily Lodge

Dramaturg

Michael X. Zelenak

Table Decoration

Consultant

David McFadden

Chef Nineteenth-Century

Meals

Rick Ellis

Dance Consultant

Elizabeth Aldrich

Cast
Daniel Day-Lewis
Newland Archer
Michelle Pfeiffer
Ellen Olenska
Winona Ryder
May Welland
Richard E. Grant
Larry Lefferts
Alec McCowen
Sillerton Jackson
Geraldine Chaplin
Mrs Welland
Mary Beth Hurt
Regina Beaufort
Stuart Wilson
Julius Beaufort
Miriam Margolyes
Mrs Mingott
Siân Phillips
Mrs Archer
Carolyn Farina
Janey Archer
Michael Gough
Henry van der Luyden
Alexis Smith
Louisa van der Luyden
Jonathan Pryce
Rivière
Robert Sean Leonard
Ted Archer
Linda Faye Farkas
Female Opera Singer
Michael Rees Davis
Terry Cook
Jon Garrison
Male Opera Singers
Howard Erskine
Beaufort Guest
John McLoughlin
Christopher Nilsson
Party Guests

Kevin Sanders
The Duke
W. B. Brydon
Mr Urban Dagonet
Tracey Ellis
Gertrude Lefferts
Cristina Pronzati
Countess Olenska’s Maid
Clement Fowler
Florist
Norman Lloyd
Mr Letterblair
Cindy Katz
Stage Actress
Thomas Gibson
Stage Actor
Zoë
As Herself
June Squibb
Mingott Maid
Domenica Scorsese
Katie Blenker
Mac Orange
Archer Maid
Brian Davies
Philip
Thomas Barbour
Archer Guest
Henry Fehren
Bishop
Patricia Dunnock
Mary Archer
Joanne Woodward
Narrator

12,442 feet
138 minutes

New York City, the 1870s. Lawyer Newland Archer is engaged to May Welland of the powerful Mingott family. He is anxious to announce the engagement at the Beauforts’ annual ball, partly to deflect the gossips’ attention from May’s cousin Ellen Olenska, who has returned from Europe after the failure of her scandalous marriage to Count Olenski. Archer wants an early wedding, but May is under pressure from her mother to observe the proprieties. Meanwhile, the rumours about Ellen’s past proliferate, much to Archer’s annoyance. After New York society snubs Ellen by refusing to attend a dinner given in her honour by May’s grandmother Mrs Mingott, Archer asks the influential Van der Luydens to intervene. Ellen is invited to dinner at the Van der Luydens’, where she asks Archer to visit her at home. Ellen arrives late for their appointment and Archer is disconcerted to see her with Julius Beaufort, a notorious womaniser. Afterwards, Archer orders the usual bouquet of lilies of the valley for May and sends yellow roses anonymously to Ellen.

Archer’s boss Mr Letterblair asks him on behalf of the Mingott family to dissuade Ellen from going ahead with her divorce. Ellen is upset, but accepts Archer’s advice that the scandal would be too damaging. Archer is increasingly drawn to Ellen and, when May goes away on holiday with her family, responds to a letter Ellen sends him from the Van der Luydens’ by visiting her there. Before he can declare his feelings, they are interrupted by Julius Beaufort and Archer leaves angrily. He goes to see May and pressurises her to bring forward the wedding. May is suspicious of his reasons, but Archer assures her there is no one else. When he hears that the count wants Ellen

back, Archer visits Ellen to persuade her not to return to her husband. He finally tells her he loves her, but Ellen, who returns his love, refuses him on the grounds that she could never hurt May. A letter arrives from May telling Ellen that her mother has agreed to the wedding being brought forward.

Eighteen months after the wedding, Archer, still obsessed with Ellen, hears that she is visiting Boston and invents an excuse to go there. Ellen explains that she is meeting Rivière, the count’s secretary, who is trying to persuade her to return to her husband. Archer begs her not to go back to Europe, and she agrees to refuse the count’s offer of recompense. Meanwhile, Beaufort’s business collapses and Ellen loses her investments. After Mrs Mingott has a stroke, the impoverished Ellen returns to New York to take care of her. Archer and Ellen decide to meet and make love, but before the rendezvous takes place, May breaks the news to Archer that Ellen is leaving for Europe. Archer is devastated, and realises that May’s family and friends, believing that he and Ellen are lovers, have conspired to keep them apart. Feeling trapped, he tries to tell May about his feelings and wish to travel, but she forestalls him with the news that she is pregnant. She reveals that she told Ellen about her pregnancy two weeks earlier. Archer finally accepts his fate. Many years later, after May’s death, the 57-year-old Archer accompanies his son Ted on a business trip to Paris. Ted has arranged a surprise visit to Countess Olenska, but Archer sends him on ahead, and turns and walks away.

Scorsese’s *The Age of Innocence* might have been subtitled *The Man Who Could Not Love Women*. The poet of impotence has translated Edith Wharton’s acerbic scrutiny of the suffocating codes and customs of late nineteenth-century New York into melodrama, centred on a tragic hero incapable of breaking through the social ties that bind. On the face of it, the film is a faithful adaptation of Wharton’s book, even allowing the writer herself a voice in Joanne Woodward’s narration. The minutiae of the novel’s descriptions of decor and fashion have been lovingly recreated, as the matching of image and voice-over testifies. This is a meeting not only of minds but of compulsions: the obsessional film-maker has found a fellow fetishist in Wharton, whose fascination with fine detail takes social realism to excess. And, of course, they are both artists who study their society with outsiders’ eyes.

The shift that takes place in this adaptation is subtle – as delicate as Wharton’s *découpage*. Newland Archer, with his cultural aspirations and dreams of leaving, is as much the centre of the novel as the film, and Wharton, who was herself an exile in Europe, was clearly in sympathy with her hero’s longing to escape. Yet the secret of her success in depicting Archer’s psyche is the distance she takes on his attitude to women. For ►



Hansom couple: Pfeiffer, Day-Lewis

◀ Wharton, Archer is a flawed, contradictory character, as much at the mercy of his own condescending view of the society women who surround him as of society itself. Scorsese has softened the novel's satire of Archer, reserving it instead, through the use of voice-over, for the manners and morals of fashionable New York. For Scorsese, Archer is pure victim – of his background, the claustrophobic matriarchal culture he inhabits – whereas for Wharton, his incapacity plays a key role in the victimisation of Ellen, whose own tragedy as social outcast is given more weight in the novel.

Such distance as Scorsese does take on Archer is realised, characteristically, partly as a problem of vision. His film is literally an art movie in which characters are judged according to their taste and the audience is tested on how many paintings and *objets d'art* it can identify. The camera follows Archer's gaze as he travels from room to room examining acquisition after acquisition. But the connoisseur's eye that sets him apart from most of his peers is also his downfall. Archer's approach to life and love is that of an aesthete – he would rather look than act. To him, May's niceness is a curtain hiding her basic emptiness, but it is his own inability to see beyond surfaces that separates him from the woman he professes to love. His first sight of Ellen after his marriage is from afar as he watches her on the seashore gazing out over the ocean. He promises himself that if she turns round, he will go to meet her, but she does not move and the moment is lost. The scene of Ellen on the shore is reminiscent of an Impressionist painting, with sparkling sunlight and soft colours creating a highly romanticised vista in which the static figure of a woman acts as a kind of guarantee of order and harmony.

Ellen's immobility in this sequence is the mirror image of Archer's passivity and resistance to change. The seashore scene is poignantly replayed at the end of the movie, when Archer, now 57, sits outside Ellen's flat in Paris trying to decide whether to go in to see her. As her manservant closes the window, the image dissolves into a thousand particles of light and Ellen is safely locked away as a memory. But then, she was never real, nor did Archer want her to be, in spite of his token defence of women's rights. Archer's aestheticisation of Ellen is reflected in the portraits of women which figure prolifically in the film, as well as in the painterly poses which the characters take up from time to

time. And it is there in Archer's fetishism, his fixation on Ellen's shoe, her pink parasol, the whisper of her skirts, revealing that the emptiness or lack he so despises in May is actually at the heart of masculinity. Once again, Scorsese creates a dark, pessimistic vision of male desire in which woman is never more than an alibi.

But what if the woman should move? In 1920, when Wharton wrote *The Age of Innocence*, women were certainly on the move, and the novel registers, in the outcast figure of Countess Olenska, the social anxieties attendant on their economic and sexual emancipation. This clearly struck a chord with Scorsese, whose Archer is both dismayed by Ellen's unconventional behaviour and panic-stricken by May's single-mindedness. In the crucial scene in which his wife tells him she is pregnant, dashing for good his hopes of following Ellen to Europe, she rises from her chair and towers over him, causing him to recoil. Scorsese films her gesture twice, the second time focusing on the bustle-encased lower half of her body and heightening the rustle of her skirt. It is a powerful image of male terror in the face of the maternal body.

Scorsese seems unexpectedly at home with period drama, taking more than one cue from that other saga of social change and doomed love, *The Magnificent Ambersons*. As in Welles' film, the tension between tradition and modernity is signalled by the use of irises and masking, which looks back to silent cinema while at the same time acting as harbinger of the new medium about to take the late nineteenth century by storm. *The Magnificent Ambersons* is melancholic, treating its characters swept up in the tide of history with sympathy and projecting a sense of loss at what is sacrificed in the name of progress. At first glance, Scorsese's movie is less nostalgic, ending on a hopeful note which recognises that Archer's children will achieve the happiness he denied himself. For Scorsese, as for Wharton, Archer's final decision to walk away from love is the last nail in the coffin of the past in which he is entombed. Yet it is clear that the film-maker, more than the novelist, identifies with Archer's desire to live in his memories rather than face reality. Scorsese's *Age of Innocence* is suffused with fear of loss, most notably in its striving for period authenticity (always a lost cause) and in its obsession with faithfully reproducing the novel.

This lends the film a static, stultified quality which is entirely appropriate to Daniel Day-Lewis' frozen stiffness as Archer, but does less justice to the free-wheeling body language of more unconventional characters, such as Julius Beaufort, played with vulgar verve by Stuart Wilson, or Michelle Pfeiffer's Ellen, who strides out with an appealing mannish swagger. All the performances are excellent, and the production is a visual *tour de force*; but it really is time to lift the shroud of despair.

Pam Cook

Another Stakeout

USA 1993

Director: John Badham

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Touchstone Pictures

Executive Producer

John Badham

Producers

Jim Kouf

Cathleen Summers

Lynn Bigelow

Co-producer

D.J. Caruso

Associate Producers

Justis Greene

Kristine J. Schwarz

Production Associate

Jonathan Brandstein

Production Co-ordinators

Kate Petersen

Office Las Vegas:

Barbara Cicio

Unit Production Managers

Justis Greene

2nd Unit:

Heather Meehan

Location Managers

Rino Pace

Las Vegas:

Christine O'Rourke

2nd Unit Director

D.J. Caruso

Casting

Carol Lewis

Vancouver:

Lynne Carrow

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors

David Sosna

Bill Bannerman

John B. Lind

Peter Whyte

2nd Unit:

Michael Rohl

Las Vegas:

Thomas A. Smith

Screenplay

Jim Kouf

Based on characters

created by Jim Kouf

Director of Photography

Roy H. Wagner

Scope

In colour

prints by

Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of Photography

John Bartley

Camera Operators

John Clothier

Rod Parkhurst

2nd Unit:

Cameron MacDonald

Opticals

Pacific Title

Editors

Frank Morris

Film:

Kevin Stitt

Production Designer

Lawrence G. Paull

Art Director

Richard Hudolin

Set Design

Richard Harrison

Set Decorators

Rose Marie McSherry

Las Vegas:

Julia Laughlin

On-Set Dresser

Brent Bennett

Special Effects Supervisor

Tim Storvick

Special Effects Co-ordinators

John Thomas

Las Vegas:

Darryl Pritchett

Music

Arthur B. Rubinstein

Orchestrations

Brad Warnaar

Music Editor

Abby Treloggen

Songs

"Come On Get Happy"

by Wes Ferrell, Danny

Janssen; "Love Has a

Mind of its Own" by

Tom Snow, Jimmy

Scott, performed by

Ray Charles

Costume Design

Stephanie Nolin

Costume Supervisors

Patricia Lynne

Galbraith

Las Vegas:

Bernadette O'Brien

Make-up Artists

Sandy Cooper

Las Vegas:

Kimberly Felix

Emilio Estevez:

Kim Carrillo

Key Hairstylist

Sherry Linder

Title Design

Pittard-Sullivan-

Fitzgerald

Supervising Sound Editor

William L. Manager

Sound Editors

Richard Oswald

James Isaacs

Dale Johnston

Adam Johnston

ADR Supervisor

Devon Curry

Sound Recordists

Rick Patton

2nd Unit:

Tony Poulsen

Las Vegas:

Willie Burton

Music:

John Richards

ADR Recordist

Jeff Courtie

Foley Recordist

Mary Jo Lang

Dolby stereo

Supervising Sound Re-recordists

Wayne Artman

Tom Dahl

Allen L. Stone

Foley Artists

Alicia Stevenson

John Roesch

Stunt Co-ordinators

Conrad Palmisano

Tony Morelli

Stunts

John Wardlow

Bernice Pock

Sammy Thurman

Jacob Rupp

Dawn Stoffer-Rupp

Betty Thomas

Dorothy Fehr

George Josef

Brent Woolsey

John M. Johnson

Debby L. Ross

Cast

Richard Dreyfuss

Chris Lecce

Emilio Estevez

Bill Reimers

Rosie O'Donnell

Gina Garrett

Dennis Farina

Brian O'Hara

Marcia Strassman

Pam O'Hara

Cathy Moriarty

Lu Delano

Madeleine Stowe

Maria

John Rubinstein

Thomas Hassrick

Miguel Ferrer

Tony Castellano

Sharon Maughan

Barbara Burnside

Christopher Doyle

McNamara

Sharon Schaffer

Tilghman

Rick Seaman

Jan Speck

Van Agents

Gene Ellison

Vegas Police Captain

Frank DeAngelo

J.R. West

Vegas Investigators

Frank C. Turner

Unlucky

Steven Lambert

Killer

Dan Lauria

Captain Coldshank

Denalda Williams

Desk Sergeant

Larry B. Scott

Garage Attendant

Christi Brasher

Blonde Date

Sammy Jackson

Gaetano

Blu Mankuma

Seattle Detective Wills

Thomas Mitchell

Seattle Detective

Gilliam

Scott Anderson

Reynaldo

Michael DeLano

Michael

Al Goto

Pizza Man

Steve Bacic

Neighbour Frank

Taylor Estevez

Ronnie Burnside

Bruce Barbour

Rick Blackwell

Cops

Michael Steve Jones

Paramedic

Chris Shoemaker

Doctor

Nancy Sosna

Cammie Ann Crier

Nurses

Martin Rogers

Coroner

9,766 feet

108 minutes

● Nevada. Hitman Tony Castellano fails to murder Lu Delano, a witness against a syndicate boss, but the woman disappears from custody and DA Thomas Hassrick, who is himself in league with the mob, orders a nationwide search. Seattle cops Chris Lecce and Bill Reimers are assigned, along with Assistant DA Gina Garrett, to stake out the luxury island home of Brian and Pam O'Hara, friends whom Lu may contact. Posing as a family, with Bill pretending to be Chris's son, the team fail to fit into the quiet neighbourhood. Against the cops' advice, Gina cultivates an acquaintance with the O'Haras, while Chris is distracted from the stakeout by the deterioration of his relationship with Maria, the girlfriend he refuses to marry and who has just moved out of his apartment.

While Chris and Gina have Brian and Pam over for a disastrously embarrassing dinner party, Bill breaks into the O'Hara house to plant a bug and is captured by Lu, who has been hiding in the basement. Thinking Bill is the hitman, Lu drags him off to kill him, with Chris and Gina in pursuit. After confusion on the waterfront, Bill is rescued and Lu detained by the cops. Hassrick alerts Castellano, who arrives and is immediately recognised as the killer by Chris and Bill, who have to shoot their way past a couple of cops to save Lu. Castellano kills the DA and is himself shot. Returning to his apartment, Chris finds Maria has returned and he proposes to her.

● Although it opens with an explosion spectacular enough for a Joel Silver film, when the reliably perfidious Miguel Ferrer cannily pumps liquid explosive into the septic tank of a desert retreat, this inflated sequel mainly plays down the origi-

nal's thrills in favour of mild comedy. The mafia plot lies around ignored for most of the film, and it is never even confirmed that Lu does take the stand against the mob. This leaves the ever-amiable Richard Dreyfuss, sidekick Emilio Estevez and the bumbling Rosie O'Donnell – not to mention her annoying 'Beethoven'-style dog – to conduct themselves as if they were in a sitcom, the sort where the mock family would be on stakeout for as many seasons as the ratings could stand before the series was cancelled. The comic highlight, a farcical dinner party at which Gina serves meatloaf shaped like an armadillo and hard-boiled-egg-and-olive miniature penguins, depends on the typical sitcom device, with the neighbours misinterpreting the central characters' eccentricities.

A lot less skilled in its blend of comedy and action than *The Hard Way*, Badham's last effort in this area, *Another Stakeout* plays to the fans by lamely recapping a few gags: when Bill has fish poured on him in the introductory chase sequence, Chris gloats at this payback for the original's finale and is promptly dropped into a spaghetti-filled garbage dumpster. Despite likeable players and competent individual scenes, the film is rendered redundant by a persistent refusal to make anything of any of the characters' potential relationships – Chris and Gina's 'marriage', Chris and Bill's transition from cop-movie buddies to sitcom father and son. An unbilled Madeleine Stowe pops up to cap off the love interest of the first movie, partitioned off in her own section of the current film and serving only to prevent any real interest being generated in a potential fulfilment of the faked marriage between Chris and Gina. As usual, a Hollywood movie is prepared to take seriously romance between a greying, middle-aged male goon and a drop-dead gorgeous fashion model type, but not to allow a dumpy, silly woman equal time, although O'Donnell does get briefly to flirt with a handyman. Given that it comes along six years after the first, not exactly memorable, *Stakeout*, it is hardly surprising that this expensive but unnecessary item failed even to do the expected sequel business in the States and now seems set to repeat its fast fade to oblivion in the international market.

Kim Newman



The boys next door: Estevez, Dreyfuss

Bhaji on the Beach

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Gurinder Chadha

Certificate 15	performed by Joe and Ian; "Charka Hai" by K Bhambra/Nihal, performed by Sangeeta; "Rabba Aj Khair" by K Bhambra/Sandhu, performed by Bhujhangy
Distributor First Independent	Costume Design Annie Symons
Production Company Umby Films	Wardrobe Supervisor Sabine Kumeling
In association with Channel Four	Make-up Supervisor Julie Van Praag
Producer Nadine Marsh-Edwards	Make-up Artists Jackie Hodgeson
Line Producer Paul Sarony	Liz Davis
Production Co-ordinator Felicity Newton	Titles/Opticals The Optical Partnership
Location Manager David Pinnington	Sound Recordists Ronald Bailey
Post-production Co-ordinator	Supervising Dubbing Editor Glen Freemantle
Shad Ali	Dubbing Mixer Paul Carr
Casting Suzanne Crawley	Dolby stereo
Gilly Poole	Stunt Double Rod Woodruff
Assistant Directors Howard Arundel	
Gavin Alexander	
Screenplay Meera Syal	
Story Meera Syal	
Gurinder Chadha	
Director of Photography John Kenway	
In colour	
Steadicam Operators Jan Pester	
Alf Tramonton	
Editor Oral Norrie Ottley	
Production Designer Derek Brown	
Art Director Helen Raynor	
Scenic Artist Paddy Hamilton	
Models Simon Bradley	
Robert Williams	
Michael Carter	
Music Craig Pruess	
John Altman	
Additional: Kuljit Bhamra	
Songs "Summer Holiday"	
by Welch, Bennett and Chadha, performed by Parminder Chadha, Sangeeta, Vibha Sharma; "Mera Laung Giwacha" by Bally Sagoo, performed by Rama/Cheshire Cat; "Queen" and "Dome" by Mitha Puri, performed by Ajuba; "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" by U2, performed by Matthew Young; "It's So Hot" by K Bhambra, performed by Joe, Ian and Caroline; "Na-Babba" by K Bhambra/Qasif, performed by Sangeeta; "Ciddha Wich Kurhi Vekko" by K Bhambra/R Dillon, performed by Bhujhangy; "Uchiya Lumbia" by K Bhambra, performed by Sangeeta, Vibha Sharma, Mohinder Kaur; "Ha La La La" by Diyal Puri, Jandu Lithra, performed by Ajuba; "Om Jai Jagdish Hare" performed by Damyanti Puri; "Tchip Tchip Song" by Werner, Rendell, performed by Raymond Wallbank; "Nach Na" by and	

Neera Sharma Madhu and Ladhu's Mother	Jonathan Cohen Steve Burgland Mark Mayhem Nightclub Dancers
David Tse Chan	ChilaBurman Prithi
Phil Croft Steve	Matt Young Karaoke Man
Raymond Wallbank Organ Player	Becky Marling Waitress
	9,069 feet 101 minutes

Birmingham. The Saheli Women's Centre, run by Simi, organises a trip to Blackpool. Among the day-trippers are Ginder, a young mother who has taken sanctuary in Simi's shelter after being physically abused by her husband Ranjit; her six-year-old son Amrik; Hashida, a student about to start medical school, who has discovered she is pregnant; Asha, a middle-aged newsagent with a university degree, who feels neglected by her husband and children and frustrated by unfulfilled personal aspirations; Ladhu and Madhu, a pair of sexually inexperienced teenagers; Pushpa, an elderly Indian housewife and grocer; Rekha, a glamorous visitor from Bombay who has time to spare during her husband's business trips to London; and Bina, a shop assistant in Marks and Spencer.

Urged on by his parents, Ranjit sets off in pursuit of the Saheli minibus. He is accompanied by his two brothers, the aggressively macho Balbir (who procures Ginder's whereabouts by physically intimidating the other young wives at the Centre), and the more compassionate Manjit. Also chasing the minibus is Oliver, a West Indian art student, who has had a secret sexual relationship with Hashida. Having originally rejected Hashida's pregnant plight, he has been urged on by his father and personal remorse to try and help her through the crisis. Meanwhile Asha continues to be troubled by visions, often of a religious nature, during which she loses track of time and place. After a racist verbal attack at a motorway service station, the women arrive safely in Blackpool. However, when Hashida's pregnancy becomes an open secret, she abruptly separates from the group. Unable to contact Oliver, she visits an abortion advice centre.

Ginder begins to relax, but her anxieties are reawakened when Amrik goes missing. Although she finds him relatively easily, unknown to her, Ranjit has caught up with them and is planning to confront her later in the day. During one of her trances, Asha walks into the sea and is rescued by a charming Blackpool thespian, Ambrose Waddington, who takes Asha on a tour of the town, culminating in a visit to a vacant theatre. Ladhu and Madhu have a fling with a couple of burger-sellers, and the whole group (minus Hashida, who is reunited with Oliver) rendezvous at a nightclub where they find themselves part of the audience participation act of three male strippers. When one of them accidentally undresses Ginder and reveals her bruises, the women leave hastily, only

to be confronted by Ranjit and his brothers. Failing to dissuade Ginder verbally, he is reduced to using physical force to abduct Amrik. When Manjit refuses to open the door of the getaway car, Ranjit is forced away by the women and Asha chastises him for his behaviour. When Balbir tries to intervene, Manjit floors him with a punch. Driving out of a nocturnally illuminated Blackpool, the women comfort Ginder and Amrik.

In 1992, Gurinder Chadha directed a film about a group of elderly Asians who shoot and edit their own home-movie/documentary, *Acting Our Age*. Structured as a series of interviews with English (white) authority figures, it wittily juxtaposed various MPs, policemen and community liaison officers with the gaping holes in their explanations (or denials) pertaining to racism. The programme was rounded off by some genuinely moving accounts of personal hardship and strife by those making the film.

The finished product (shown on BBC2) was not only redolent of great respect for the elderly immigrant (*buzurgh*) experience, but offered some trenchant observations about prevalent prejudices and what the younger, British-born generation of Asians had to offer. In *Bhaji on the Beach*, her feature film debut, Chadha has tried to adhere to this code of *buzurgh* loyalty (the age span of the participants ranges from six to late 60s), while trying to encompass the more awkward and raw elements thrown up by contemporary Asian women's lives: arranged marriages, miscegenation, intra-community racism, patriarchal sexism within a matriarchal society and the restrictions on feminine sexuality within these dual values.

As Simi bluntly announces at one point, "it's not often that we women get away from the patriarchal demands made on us in our daily lives, struggling between the double yoke of racism and sexism." However, this yoke proves too much for the film to carry. In an ensemble piece like this, with a cast which is eventually destined for the road, either the journey or the protagonists have to take centre stage. The problem is that having taken the time to introduce the characters, *Bhaji* then makes the pay-off of the film more dependent on issues rather than the people. Each person in the cast carries her own emotional baggage – an unwanted pregnancy, menopausal angst, physical abuse – but then has to deal with it through a cultural barrier: parental disapproval of a career outside medicine (Hashida), familial frowning on love-marriage brides (Ginder), and the casual dismissal of female academic achievements within Asian society (Asha). Significantly, the women unfettered by any worries (Rekha and Bina) are rendered narratively redundant the moment they board the bus.

The men in *Bhaji* fare no better. As scripted by Meera Syal, they have only two polarities to occupy: weak- ►



Day trippers: Sarita Khajuria, Mo Sesay

◀ kneed ineffectuality (Manjit, the older husbands) or macho aggression (Ranjit, Balbir), with the Afro-Caribbean Oliver (literally) left holding the baby between the two. Syal clearly has an axe to grind about Asian men – ideally against their testicles. But to balance such an exercise in castration, the film needed a more convincing foil than Jimmi Harkishin's Method-suffering husband and father and less cypherish support from the disparately aged Saheli women.

Whereas on paper the premise of such a wide-ranging age group must have been appealing, in practice their presence dilutes some of the frissons between the 'sisters' because they are of the more familiar generational-gap variety. It also leads, paradoxically, to a less collectively cohesive response to male aggression. The fact that Ranjit will eventually catch up with Ginder is never in doubt, so it is the resolution to their estrangement which is set up as *Bhaji's* climax. And here, the older women, although unequivocally against the violence, are less convincing in their acceptance of the choices open to Ginder. It's difficult to believe that Pushpa or Asha have turned their backs on such rigidly established institutions like Asian marriages or the role of women within it. The former's shrug of "What can you do?" is much harder to believe in.

Not surprisingly, the freshest and most successful characters in *Bhaji* are those who are allowed to be themselves: Ladhu and Madhu, two teenagers looking to Blackpool to fulfil frustrated desires for (limited) sex and romance, and Balbir, ferociously combining the worst excesses of Indian patriarchy with British boot-boy thugery (Tanveer Ghani, easily the best of the male cast, creates British cinema's first authentic vindaloo and lager lout).

When not hampered by the script's more heavy-handed moments, Gurinder Chadha's direction is reassuringly light and evocative. Among the film's highlights are a Punjabi rendition of 'Summer Holiday' and a magical take on Blackpool lighting up in the dark. The director's political commitment is clearly important, because at least the Asian community can recognise itself in her work, by comparison with the recent TV adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Unfortunately, in trying to explore all of these commitments in one work, *Bhaji* topples over well before the end.

Farrah Anwar

Bodies, Rest & Motion

USA 1993

Director: Michael Steinberg

Certificate
15

Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Companies
Fine Line Features/
August Entertainment
Executive Producer
Joel Castleberg

Producers
Allan Mindel
Denise Shaw
Eric Stoltz
Co-producers
Roger Hedden
Jeffrey Sudzin
Production Co-ordinator
Gina Genova
Unit Production Manager
Jeffrey Sudzin
Location Manager
Tod Swindell

Casting Director
Sunny Seibel
Assistant Directors
Mike Topozian
Mike McCue
Harry Jarvis
Screenplay
Roger Hedden
Director of Photography
Bernd Heintl

Colour
Deluxe
2nd Unit Camera Operator
Karen Grossman
Steadicam Operators
Jeff Mart
Paul Taylor
Dan Kneece
Video Playback
Chris Waggoner

Editor
Jay Cassidy
Production Designer
Stephen McCabe
Art Director
Daniel Talpers
Art Department Co-ordinator
Elizabeth Frank

Set Decorator
Helen Britten
Set Dressers
Thierry Labbe
John McElroy
Draughtswoman
Siobahn Roome

Scenic Artists
Joel Griffith
Meg Aeby
Music/Music Director
Michael Convertino
Orchestrations
Marc Falcone
Additional:
Michael Convertino
Music Producer
Michael Convertino
Music Supervisor
Karyn Rachtman
Music Editor
Ken Wannberg

Songs
"Hot Burrito #1" by
Chris Ethridge, Gram
Parsons, "Juanita" by
Chris Hillman, Gram
Parsons, "Do You Know
How It Feels" by Gram
Parsons, Goldberg,
performed by The
Flying Burrito
Brothers; "Pushin' Too
Hard" by Sky Saxon,
performed by The
Seeds; "Everything Is
Complicated" by David
Baerwald, David
Ricketts, Roger
Hedden, performed
by David & David
Costume Design
Isis Mussenden

Wardrobe Supervisor
David Sawaryn
Make-up Artist
Deborah Larsen
Hair Stylist
Cheri Montesanto-
Medcalf
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation

Supervising Sound Editors
Per Hallberg
Lon E. Bender
Dialogue Editors
Dan Rich
Randy Kelley
ADREditor
Avram Gold

Sound Recordists
Walt Martin
Bob Hile
Foley:
Nerses Gezalyan
ADR:
David Jobe
Greg Steele

Music:
Paul Brown
Dennis Sands
Dolbystereo
Consultant:
Steve F.B. Smith
Sound Re-recordists
Ken S. Polk
Bob Thirlwell

Foley:
Jim Ashwill
ADR:
Bob Deschaine
Charleen Richards
Music:
Paul Brown
Dennis Sands
Sound Effects Editors
Christopher Assells
Victor Iorillo
Nancy Macleod

Foley Walkers
Gary A. Hecker
Hilda Hodges
Cast
Phoebe Cates
Carol
Bridget Fonda
Beth
Tim Roth
Nick
Eric Stoltz
Sid
Alicia Witt
Elizabeth

Sandra Lafferty
Yard Sale Lady
Sidney Dawson
TV Customer
Jon Proudstar
Station Attendant
Scott Johnson
Chip
Keziah Weidner
Diné Woman
Peter Fonda
Motorcycle Rider

Amaryllis Borrego
Waitress
Rich Wheeler
Elizabeth's
Grandfather
Scott Frederick
TV Store Kid
Warren Burton
Radio Preacher's Voice
Lynn Fiddmont-Linsey
Debra Parsons
Katrina Perkins
Marva Hicks
Mindy Stein
Susan Beaubian
Kiki Ebsen
Singers

8,474 feet
94 minutes

Enfield, Arizona. Beth is driving home from her dead end job. She stops at a set of traffic lights and a man in a pick-up truck lets her go in front. In an unkempt living room, friends Nick and Carol carouse drunkenly. He tells her that he's moving to Butte, Montana. They are indulging in intimate play when Beth walks in. She and Nick are a couple and as they walk over to their house we learn that Carol is Nick's ex-lover.

Next day is Nick's last at his job as a TV salesman and Beth suggests he steal a set. After he has left, Sid, a painter, arrives and starts to decorate the house for the new tenants. He reminds Beth that he is the pick-up truck driver.

Over lunch, Nick discusses his route with Carol. She gives him a present and suggests that, as he is passing near his parents' home and he hasn't seen them for ten years, he should visit them. Carol then calls on Beth and tells her to go to the mall to help Nick steal the TV. At the store, Nick gives Beth a receipt with which to collect the TV. Back home, Beth and Sid watch the new set. Then Carol arrives to announce that Nick has left town. After the two girls have spent a night in a local bar, Beth returns and listens to Sid explain his philosophy of luck and love before they finally kiss.

Nick arrives at his parents' address to find the house is now occupied by a deaf old man and a young girl. The girl has lost her parents and her story completely shatters Nick's nihilistic cool. He tries to call Beth but their phone has been disconnected. He heads back to Enfield.

Meanwhile Beth and Sid are in bed and he is giving her more of his philosophy about being yourself no matter where you go. She then decides to sell all her worldly goods in a yard sale, and a recently bereaved woman offers \$300 dollars for the lot. Beth leaves. When Nick returns and finds out about Beth and Sid, he soon comes to the conclusion that Sid should go after her. The film ends with Nick and Carol on the sofa and Sid searching the highway for Beth.

Despite an ensemble cast bearing all the right grunge credentials for serious heart-searching youth, *Bodies, Rest & Motion* is curiously lacking

in the anti-glamour required of the disaffected Generation X. The characters all have the requisite dead-end Macjobs and appear to be as laid-back and feckless about their respective fates as they should be, but their movements around each other are wooden and stagebound, and director Michael Steinberg appears to have put little effort into translating this small-scale theatre play for the screen. Thus the street-smart all-American gesturing that Tim Roth is nowadays offering reads more like a desperate effort to inject life into a dead zone.

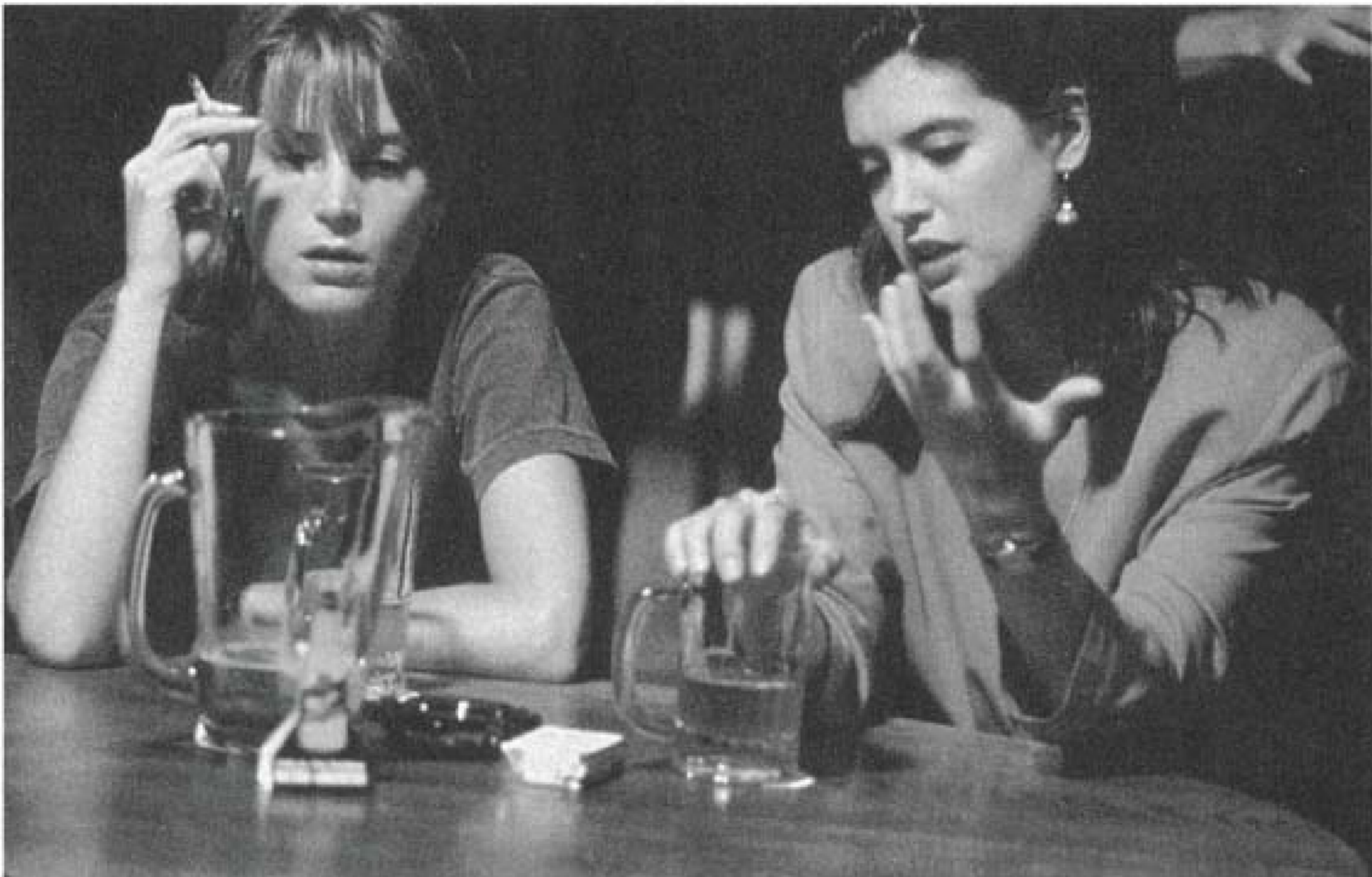
The slowly unfolding moral of this four-hander would appear to be that flight is useless but inevitable. An alternative reading provided by Eric Stoltz as Sid is that if you stay still, your luck will find you. Since Stoltz goes in search of luck at the end, while Roth returns to find his, the conclusion reached is that movement makes no difference. It's simply a demonstration of Newton's First Law of Motion, one that takes in a fair amount of jaw-dropping banality on the way.

If Stoltz's dewy-eyed, earnest puppy-dog impersonation fails to assist his delivery of greeting card sentiments such as "It's only possible to find true happiness through another", then likewise Roth's cartoon De Niro face-mangling does nothing to enhance his posturings as a tortured soul incapable of love.

Those who are the target of these messages – Bridget Fonda as Beth and Phoebe Cates as Carol – smile grimly and try to make sense of their lives: Fonda taking the real risk of total uncertainty as the antidote to coupledom and Cates opting for the more traditional role of the girl who waits for the wanderer to return. Again the film takes no stance on which option is to be preferred.

Perhaps the most unexpectedly resonant moment occurs when Roth meets a grizzled old hippy biker on the road. We learn later that behind the beard is Peter Fonda. The look of sheer awe on Roth's face could stand either for his incomprehension in the presence of a real American myth or the film's incomprehension in the presence of a representative from a proper road movie.

Nick James



Roadhouse blues: Bridget Fonda, Phoebe Cates

Calendar

Canada/Armenia/Germany 1993

Director: Atom Egoyan

Certificate
Not yet issued
Distributor
ICA Projects
Production Companies
Ego Film Arts/ZDF
German Television/
The Armenian National
Cinematheque
Co-producer
Armenia:
Arsinée Khanjian
ZDF Commissioning Editor
Doris Hepp
Production Co-ordinators
Armenia:
Norayr Kasper
Co-production
Co-ordinator:
Grigor Troyan
Toronto:
Simone Urdl
Production Manager
Armenia:
Garegin Zakojan
Location Director
Armenia:
Zaven Sarkissian
Screenplay
Atom Egoyan
Director of Photography
Norayr Kasper
In colour
8mm Video Images
Atom Egoyan
Editor
Toronto:
Atom Egoyan
Music Performed by
Duduk:
Djivan Gasparian
Piano:
Eve Egoyan
Vocals:
Garo Tchaliguan
Tar:
Hovhanness Tarpinian
Songs
"Blue Feeling", "She's
a Rocker", "Without
You" by John Grimaldi,
performed by
Studebaker John
and the Hawks

Armenian Title Design
Norair Aslanian
Titles
Film Opticals
of Canada
Sound Design
Toronto:
Steven Munro
Sound Recordists
Armenia:
Yuri Hakobian
Toronto:
Ross Redfern
Sound Re-recordist
Toronto:
Daniel Pellerin
Effects
Toronto:
Steven Munro
Foley
Toronto:
Steven Munro

Cast
Arsinée Khanjian
Translator
Ashot Adamian
Driver
Atom Egoyan
Photographer
Michelle Bellerose
Natalia Jasen
Susan Hamann
Sveta Kohli
Viva Tsvetnova
Rula Said
Annie Szamosi
Anna Pappas
Amanda Martinez
Diane Kofri
Guests

6,750 feet
75 minutes

A Canadian photographer of Armenian ancestry is visiting Armenia to take 12 photographs for a calendar. He takes along his wife to interpret, and hires a native guide to drive them around. By the end of the assignment, the photographer has twelve Armenian church photographs but has lost his wife to the driver.

Canada. Now alone at home, the photographer has the calendar on his wall, recording the places he and his wife visited. He has a series of monthly dinner dates at home with foreign women. While each of them gets up from the table to make an erotically-charged phone call to someone else, each in a different language, he writes to his wife and recalls the events in Armenia, seen in both film and video form. By May, his wife is leaving phone messages to him, and he sits masturbating to a video tape of her. In August, he writes to his adopted Armenian daughter, and asks if his wife has visited her and whether she was accompanied by another man. When his November date begins to talk erotically down the phone, the photographer stops her. She returns to the dinner table and they discuss her Armenian

background. In December, a barely discernable phone message from his wife informs the photographer that when the car was driving through a herd of sheep, she and the driver had held hands; she wonders whether, while gripping his camera, the photographer had suspected anything.

"In conceiving *Calendar*," Atom Egoyan says in his Director's Statement, "I wanted to find a story that would deal with three levels of Armenian consciousness: Nationalist, Diasporan, and Assimilationist. Thus the guide, like Ashot Adamian [who plays him], is an Armenian who was born and raised in Armenia. The translator, like Arsinée Khanjian, is an Armenian raised in a large Armenian community outside of Armenia. And the photographer, like Atom Egoyan, is an Armenian completely assimilated into another culture."

Remarkably, for his sixth (and perhaps best) feature, Atom Egoyan has managed to extend his obsessions with the technology of imagery and communication well beyond artistic expectations. In *Calendar*, shot on 16mm and video, Egoyan has manoeuvred what to date have often proved to be distancing, and arguably de-humanising devices – the photograph (*The Adjuster*), video tape (*Family Viewing*, *Speaking Parts*, *The Adjuster*), and in *Calendar*, the telephone answering machine – to emphasise a very personalised sense of loss and social isolation.

Despite his above declaration, the predominant defining process in *Calendar* is neither the act of photographing national monuments (always visually resplendent in the background) nor the pithy, nationalist observations of the driver/guide/lover ("I think if you had children you would bring them to grow up here"), but the shift of emotional allegiances which takes place between the photographer and his wife. Egoyan has often been accused of being preoccupied with the aesthetic at the expense of his characters. In *Calendar* there seems to be a deliberate ploy to undermine the photographer's (and by proxy, the director's) need to remain in control. So while he chastises his wife for wasting batteries, or feels unable to participate in any Armenian social intercourse in case he misses the right shade of lighting or contrast, Egoyan's character is constantly drawn into watching and recording seemingly trivial details (the flock of sheep, the wife's careless laughter with the driver or her massaging of her tired limbs), which are clearly intruding into his consciousness but which he finds unable to process. His senses are only engaged via the camera or camcorder, without a concomitant cerebral response.

This sense of perceptual disturbance is heightened by *Calendar's* refusal to follow the surface formality of the film's time structure. Although punctuated by the arrival (or departure) of each calendar month, the temporal relationships between people and events are constantly being distorted



Sex and travel: Arsinée Khanjian

and replayed. Episodes are evoked by memory, sometimes spontaneously, at other times deliberately (the ritualistic dating); tapes are played back at normal and fast-forward speeds; and phone messages, whether banal (the escort bureau) or intensely emotive (the wife's messages from Armenia), are held in limbo until acknowledged by the absent photographer.

Behind the cameras, the photographer remains an ethereal presence, unseen and untouched, whereas in front of the churches, the driver is a physically strong, charismatic spirit, equally at home with a serenading guitar or an anecdote about architectural origins. Only the diasporan wife is able to engage and empathise with this sense of freedom, and all the photographer can do, as he points out, is to passively "watch whilst the two of you leave me and disappear into a landscape I'm about to photograph."

However, to share this nationalist freedom, a return to home terrain is not enough. There are several indications in the film that the photographer is absent in spirit in Canada as well. Phone messages constantly apologise for the fact that he's confined to his dark room "all day". And it takes more than just the departure of his wife to jolt him back to light. For months he remains on pause, unable to respond to his wife's letters and messages. Denial gives way to sadness and finally rationalisation, via Egoyan's well-worn metaphor for alienation – solitary masturbation in front of the video screen. But in *Calendar*, the ejaculate isn't semen but sentiment. Literally so, because the photographer breaks off a wank to start writing ("Yes, I received all your messages and your calls, and now feel ready to write back").

Intriguingly, as the artist lets down his emotional guard (that is, becomes less concerned with the aesthetic), the assimilationist's self-awareness becomes more obvious. The dirty foreign phone call becomes an incidental prop to the carefully constructed scenarios, dismissed as a delaying irritant by November. And significantly the photographs begin to blend and blur as their sequential progression with calendar months begins to falter. The photographer has been freed from his assimilation assignment, but at what cost? Given the self-referential and revisionist subtext of the film, this open-ended question evokes a sense of genuine anticipatory excitement for Egoyan's next venture.

Farrah Anwar

Carlito's Way

USA 1993

Director: Brian De Palma

Certificate
18
Distributor
UIP
Production Company
Universal
Executive Producers
Louis A. Stoller
Ortwin Freyermuth
Producers
Martin Bregman
Willi Baer
Michael S. Bregman
Associate Producer
Judith Stevens
Production Controller
Kathleen McGill
Production Co-ordinator
Jackie Martin
Unit Production Manager
Judith Stevens
Location Manager
Jan Foster
2nd Unit Director
Eric Schwab
Casting
Bonnie Timmermann
Assistant Directors
Chris Soldo
Daniel M. Stillman
2nd Unit:
Jerry Leeds
Sam Hoffman
Screenplay
David Koepp
Based on the novels
Carlito's Way. After Hours
by Edwin Torres
Director of Photography
Stephen H. Burum
Panavision
Colour
DeLuxe
Camera Operator
Craig DiBona
Steadicam Operator
Larry McConkey
Visual Effects
Pacific Data Images
Optical Effects
The Effects House
Video
Ed Gleason
Editors
Bill Pankow
Kristina Boden
Production Designer
Richard Sylbert
Art Director
Gregory Bolton
Set Decorator
Leslie A. Pope
Set Dressers
Lead:
Bruce Lee Gross
Dennis Zack
Robin Koenig
Bruce Swanson
Chris Nelson
Anne Wenniger
Claudette Didul
Scenic Artists
Chargeman:
Roland Brooks
William Armstrong
Katy Dilkes
Bruno Robitti
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Steven Kirshoff
Music
Patrick Doyle
Music Extracts
"Lakmé" by Léo Delibes,
performed by Joan
Sutherland, Orchestre
National de l'Opéra De
Monte Carlo
Orchestrations
Lawrence Ashmore
Music Supervisor
Jellybean Benitez
Supervising Music Editor
Roy Prendergast
Music Editor
Nicholas Meyers
Music Co-ordinator
Maggie Rodford
Songs
"Parece Mentira"
by Pedro Flores,
performed by Marc
Antony; "Stickball

Guaguanco Jam" by and
performed by Jellybean;
"Oye Como Va" by Tito
Puate, performed by
Santana; "Pillow Talk"
by Sylvia Robinson,
Michael Burton,
performed by Sinoia;
"TSOP – The Sounds of
Philadelphia" by
Kenny Gamble, Leon
Huff, performed by
MFSB featuring The
Three Degrees; "Back
Stabbers" by Leon Huff,
Gene McFadden, John
Whitehead, "I Love
Music" by Kenny
Gamble, Leon Huff,
performed by
The O'Jays; "Do It ('Til
You're Satisfied)"
by Billy Nichols,
performed by
B.T. Express; "Fly,
Robin, Fly" by Sylvester
Levey, Stephan Prager,
performed by The Silver
Convention; "You
Should Be Dancing" by
Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb,
Maurice Gibb,
performed by The
Bee Gees; "Got To Be
Real" by Cheryl Lynn,
David Paich, David
Foster, performed by
Cheryl Lynn; "(Shake
Shake Shake) Shake
Your Booty", "That's The
Way (I Like It)" by Harry
W. Casey, performed by
KC and The Sunshine
Band; "Rock The Boat"
by Wally Holmes,
performed by The Hues
Corporation; "I Love
Music" by Kenny
Gamble, Leon Huff,
performed by Rozalla;
"You Are So Beautiful"
by Billy Preston, Bobby
Fisher, performed by Joe
Cocker; "Disco Inferno"
by Leroy Green, Tyrone
Kersey, "Rock Your
Baby" by Harry Casey,
performed by Ed Terry;
"Lady Marmalade"
by Kenny Nolan, Bob
Crewe, performed
by Labelle; "Mi Gente"
by Johnny Pacheco,
performed by Hector
Lavoe; "Vieja Luna"
by Orlando De La Rosa,
performed by Celia
Cruz, Johnny Pacheco;
"Abuelita" by Willie
Colon, Hector Lavoe,
performed by Willie
Colon; "El Watusi"
by and performed by
Ray Barretto; "Che Che
Cole" by and performed
by Willie Colon;
"Muneca" by and
performed by Eddie
Palmieri; "Alma Con
Alma" by Juanito
Marquez, performed
by Ray Barretto,
Adalberto Santiago;
"El Todopoderoso" by
Willie Colon, Hector
Lavoe, performed by
Hector Lavoe
Choreography
Jeffrey Hornaday
Debbie Benitez
Costume Design
Aude Bronson-Howard
Wardrobe Supervisors
Mark Burchard
Extras:
Barbara J. Hause
Jill E. Anderson
Pat Sanftner

Make-up Artists

Key:
Michael Laudati
Margot Boccia
Craig Lyman
Cynthia Mudd

Hair Stylists

Key:
Michael Kriston
Milton Buras
John Quaglia
Peggy Shierholz
Lydia Bensimmon

Title Design
R/Greenberg
Associates West
Supervising Sound Editor
Maurice Schell

Sound Editors
Branka Mrkic
Peter Odabashian
Richard P. Cirincione
Ira Spiegel
James H. Nau
Susan Sklar Friedman

ADR Supervisor
Jane McCulley
ADR Editors
Hal Levinsohn
Tony Martinez

Foley Editor
Stuart Stanley
Sound Recordists
Les Lazarowitz
Anthony Ortiz
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Lee Dichter
Additional Voices
David Kramer's
Loop Group
Technical Consultants
Judge Edwin Torres
Charlie Candelario
Joseph Conzo
Stunt Co-ordinator
Dick Ziker
Stunts
Buddy Joe Hooker
Chad Randall
Dave Reilly
E.J. Evans
Edward J. Aulisi
Frank Ferrara Jnr
Gene Harrison
George Aguilar
Jim Lovelett
Mike Mirkin
Stunt Pilot
Al Cerullo

Cast
Al Pacino
Carlito Brigante
Sean Penn
Dave Kleinfeld
Penelope Ann Miller
Gail
John Leguizamo
Benny Blanco
Ingrid Rogers
Steffie
Luis Guzman
Pachanga
James Rebhorn
Norwalk
Joseph Siravo
Vinnie Taglialucci
Viggo Mortensen
Lalin
Richard Foronjy
Pete
Jorge Porcel
Saso
Frank Minucci
Tony Taglialucci
Adrian Pasdar
Frankie
John Agustin Ortiz
Guajiro
Angel Salazar
Walberto
Al Israel
Rolando
Rick Aviles
Quisqueya
Jaime Sanchez
Rudy
Edmonte Salvato
Battaglia (Big Guy)
Paul Mazursky
Judge Feinstein
Tera Tabrizi
Club Date
Victor Sierra
Kid
Caesar Cordova
Barber

Jon Seda
Ruben Rivera
Dominicans
Sherie Mambu
Brenda Hernandez
Girlfriends
Elliot Santiago
Knifeman
Frank Ferrara
Manzanero
John Hoyt
Chuck Zito
Steven Puente
Tony Cucci
Club Bouncers
Alfred Sauchelli Jnr
Anthony Catanese
Sam Weber
Sonny Zito
Bodyguards
Walter T. Meade
Jackson Corrections
Officer
Michael Hodge
Richard Council
Diamond Room Men
Lindsey Lombardi
Diamond Room Dancer
James Bulleit
Louie
Crystal Haney
Estate Party Woman
Gregory Misciagno
Italian at Copa
Mel Gorham
Pachanga's Date
Rocco Sisto
Panama Hatman
John Finn
Duncan
Brian Tarantina
Speller
Jaime Tirelli
Valentin
Owen Hollander
Cab Driver
John Michael Bolger
Ralph Destino Jnr
Vincent Jerosa
Luke Toma
Frank Pietrangolare
Mike Sheehan
Cops
Dean Rader-Duval
Med Tech
Gene Canfield
Train Conductor
Sharmagne Leland-St. John
Woman at Grand
Central
Rene Rivera
Orlando Urdaneta
Bartenders
Troy A. Hawkes
Solicitor at Go-Go Club
Kim Rideout
Gail's Friend at
Dance Studio
Drita Barak
Christopher Bregman
Natalia Rey
Joe Conzo
Gaetano "Tom" Lisi
Debra Niewald
Club Patrons
Christina Murphy
Juliette Ortega
Mary C. Hammett
Waitresses
Debbie Benitez
Roberta Mathes
Freddy Rios
Mike Ramos
Dancers
Yelba Matamoros
Blanco's Girlfriend
Nelson Vasquez
Blanco Associate
Jason Daryn
Party Waiter
Dan Brennan
Michael Moran
Party Guests
Vinnie Pastore
Garry Blackwood
Copa Wiseguys
Cynthia Lamontagne
Woman at Elevator
Bo Diehl
Kato
Casino Men
James V. Miller
Black Jack Dealer
Marc Antony
Latin Band at Disco

13,027 feet
145 minutes

Carlito Brigante, a convicted heroin dealer five years into a 30-year prison sentence, is freed thanks to his lawyer Dave Kleinfeld. He announces that he will go straight, that prison has changed him. But Carlito no longer recognises the places or the faces in his old neighbourhood. All he wants is \$75,000 to buy into a friend's business.

Brigante finds trouble when he goes with his nephew to a drug deal; everyone but Carlito ends up dead, and he suddenly has enough money to buy into and manage a nightclub his lawyer part-owns. While running the club, he meets Benny Blanco, an up-and-coming coke dealer who idolises him. He also sees Gail, a stripper, whom he'd loved before he went to jail. Kleinfeld has trouble dealing with his client Taglialucci, a mafioso who accuses Kleinfeld of stealing the million dollars he had received to bribe a witness. Taglialucci demands that Kleinfeld help him bust out of jail. Kleinfeld plays on Carlito's sense of honour and drags him into his problems. Meanwhile Carlito has a chance to kill Blanco, but doesn't take it. Gail warns Carlito that he should stay away from Dave, but Carlito still believes that he owes Dave. Carlito goes with Dave as backup, but Dave murders Taglialucci and his son Frank. Everybody now wants revenge. The mob tries to kill Dave and the District Attorney wants Carlito to testify against him for Taglialucci's murder. Carlito buys

train tickets to Miami for himself and Gail, but before he can escape, the mob comes after him. He defeats them in a shoot-out in Grand Central Station, only to be murdered on the platform by Blanco.

As Al Pacino said in another movie, "Every time I think I'm out, they pull me back in."

Neither an incoherent mess like *Raising Cain* nor a sprawling disaster like *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Carlito's Way* offers an intriguing spectacle. The supporting cast of ultra-New York character actors, the film's catalogue of aggressive-compulsive behaviour, and the occasional explosion into trade-marked Brian De Palma set pieces suggest that the director has snuck onto a Sidney Lumet set and directed the big action scenes.

Carlito's Way stands to De Palma's career as *Cape Fear* stands to Scorsese's – it is the work of a man who needs a hit to prove that he can turn in a solid job of work that will make money. If the film fails to profit, and nothing suggests that it will, the failure cannot be laid at De Palma's door. The films differ in that De Palma reins in his natural expressionism and fondness for big gestures – the big action sequences achieve neither the hallucinatory highs of *The Fury* nor the operatic grandeur of *The Untouchables* – where Scorsese pushed his farther to fit more comfortably into the overwrought world of the Hollywood action movie.



Once a dude: Al Pacino

On the other hand, *Carlito's Way* may simply be one of those films that force us to confront an uncomfortable fact about people we regard as great directors. A lot of film-makers in the second level of greatness – the level below the Renoirs, Hitchcocks and Buñuels – face enormous difficulties in sustaining their achievements and careers. Half the problem lies with the industrial process of film-making itself. The longer a director in Hollywood sustains his career, the more subject he becomes to the economic imperatives of the business. To step back from big-budget films seems at once a logistical challenge and an admission of failure. The longer a director stays in the business, the more difficult it becomes to make the kind of movies that got him interested in film-making in the first place.

The other half may be in the nature of directorial talent itself. The industrial side of the business demands that a director connect with a public. No audience, no films. A lot of second-level greats – Frank Capra, Anthony Mann, Woody Allen – manage to have a decade when their sensibility and the public's harmonise. Then the zeitgeist shifts and people wonder why the films have declined in quality. Emerging from the extraordinary freedom of the early 70s and working in Hollywood at a time when *The Godfather*, a big expensive project, cost less than \$10 million, De Palma's hits didn't have to be terribly big to recoup their cost and his flops were not terribly expensive. In the current economic climate, when the average cost of a Hollywood movie has climbed into the \$25 million range before prints and advertising, studio demands are a straitjacket to someone whose greatest challenge has always been to discover movies to fit around his visionary set pieces. We might remember that De Palma began and ended the 80s with flops – *Blow Out* and *Bonfire*. His only real hit in that decade was *The Untouchables*, and his stab at Oscar-winning respectability, *Casualties of War*, flopped badly.

This new De Palma film offers a fierce Pacino performance, a far better one than the flamboyant fraud of *Scent of a Woman*, and a trio of big action sequences as exciting as anything seen on screen this year. One of the most admirable things about De Palma is his refusal to bow to the current trend in action thrillers to cut, cut, cut – he remains one of the few directors addicted to the long take, and to those strange, floating, unstable shots that can be achieved only with the Steadicam, and which in De Palma's hands become the sole aesthetic justification for the device.

Carlito's Way has the assurance of a good film-maker working with good material. But it also feels padded – the entire romance plot could disappear from the film without anybody noticing. Worst of all, it feels like the work of a film-maker marking time until something comes along that he can feel passion for.

John Harkness

Decadence

United Kingdom/Germany 1993

Director: Steven Berkoff

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

Mayfair

Production Company

Vendetta Films

With financial assistance from

European

Co-production Fund

N.R.W.

Executive Producers

Fred Bestall

Frank Henschke

Romain Schröder

Producers

Lance W. Reynolds

Christoph Meyer-Wiel

Co-producer

Wieland Schulz Keil

Production Supervisor

Filipe Ledeboer

Production Co-ordinators

Laurent Dumas

Frank Feys

Corinne Le-Hong

2nd Unit Production Manager

Gina Carter

Unit Manager

Wilma Harzenetter

Location Manager

Serge Moulin

2nd Unit Director

Dominic Berger

Casting

Sue Jones

Dancers:

Sabine Meyer-Wiel

Assistant Directors

Eric Bartonio

Dominic Berger

Helen Cotton

2nd Unit:

Rupert Graves

Screenplay

Steven Berkoff

Director of Photography

Denis Lenoir

In colour

2nd Unit Camera

John Ward

Blue Screen Optical

Filmoptic

Editor

John Wilson

Production Designers

Yolanda Sonnabend

Simon Holland

Art Directors

Wilbert Van Dorp

Ulli Hanisch

Set Dressers

Rayke Verhoeven

Andrea Kessler

Scenic Artists

Ben Zuydwijk

Danilo Ledeboer

Models

Lalia Ghalt

Music

Stewart Copeland

Music Producer

Jeff Seitz

Songs

"There'll Always Be

an England" by Parker,

Charles; "Fever", "The

Cost of Loving"

by Warren Bennett,

performed by Flare;

"Wanna Be Your Lover"

by Warren Bennett,

Simon Smart,

performed by Murray

Grant

Choreography

Rodolopho Leoni

Thorsten Kuth

Costume Design

David Blight

Wardrobe

David Taylor

Melanie Millward

Françoise Meyer

Make-up

Sally Harrison

Maureen Hannaford-

Naisbitt

Titles

General Screen

Enterprises

Sound

George Richards

Sound Editors

Zane Hayward

Dialogue:

Shirley Shaw

ADR/Foley Recordist

Ted Swanscott

Music Recordist

Jeff Seitz

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recording

Pete Smith

Foley Artists

Jack Stew

Pauline Benion

Cast

Steven Berkoff

Steve/Les/Helen's

'Coutourier'

Joan Collins

Helen/Sybil

Christopher Biggins

Michael Winner

Marc Sinden

Edward Duke

Robert Longdon

David Alder

Tim Dry

Imogen Bain

Susannah Morley

Ursula Smith

Veronica Lang

Mathilda Ziegler

The Entourage

Terence Beesley

Giovanni

Maggie Parke

Waitress

Denise Evans

Housemaid

Peter Brennan

Old Retainer

Anthony Glover

Butler

Brendan Morgan

Valet

Jill Mercedes

Maid

HamarErez

Piano Player

Clara Fischer

Angry Motorist

Bernd Kaurisch

Martin Hirner

Enrico Tedde

Peter Dietrich

Mikel Aristegui

Dancing Waiters

9,720feet

108 minutes



Ghastly good taste: Steven Berkoff, Joan Collins

Rich Helen, who lives amid Mayfair pretentiousness, is having an affair with Steve, the husband of nouveau-riche Sybil; while Sybil is having an affair with Les, the private investigator she has hired to trail her philandering husband. Les trails Steve to Helen's flat, where Steve realises for the first time that Sybil is having him followed. At Sybil's home in Cheam, Les, over drinks, recounts his day's detective work and vows to kill Steve. After a late evening meal out, Steve and Helen return to Mayfair where they alleviate their upper-class ennui by playing sexual games – Steve pretends to be a dog, nuzzling his way up Helen's skirt, whilst Helen, as 'Scheherazade', tells Steve a story. Les and Sybil have just had sex, and are continuing to plot Steve's murder.

Helen and Steve throw a dinner party, but in Cheam very little – including the clichéd post-coital chit-chat – has changed. The only difference is that Les's murder schemes have become more elaborate. After a drink at his club, Steve goes on to a bar, where, to the disgust of Helen, he knocks back nine margaritas and throws up in a champagne cooler. Les, meanwhile, embellishes his murder plans. Helen and Steve then arrive at The Ivy for their last, longest supper, Steve devouring so much he once again vomits, this time behind the sofa. The film ends with an image of decadence in its death throes: the tables in The Ivy coated in cobwebs, and everything frozen except for Helen and Steve who are still sitting at the same table as before, thanking the waiter for "a wonderful night".

Despite its whodunnit premise, *Decadence* is not a plot-driven intrigue, but a series of detailed vignettes that cumulatively create a portrait of 80s decadence – the mannerisms, tastes, class structures and absurdities of that money-preoccupied decade. In one scene, Helen, in riding habit and en route to a hunt, issues Steve with the challenging offer of an impromptu riding lesson – "Well, you be my horse, and I'll show you how to ride" – and mounts him. What ensues is a grotesque parody of sex, the upper classes (like the yuppies in Mike Leigh's *High Hopes*) staving off ultimate bore-

dom by titillating each other with bawdy bestial innuendo. As Helen sits astride the crouching Steve, whipping him for being sluggish, she breathlessly delivers a monologue evoking the thrill of "the fury, the chase, the ecstasy" until, satiated, she dismounts, sweaty and dishevelled.

Berkoff's style is gross, grandiose and expressionistic. His intention is to offend and appal with this vision of the tasteless classes making spectacles of themselves. However, it takes a while to get into *Decadence* as a film, because the rhythmic verse Berkoff uses, the monologues to camera and the frozen tableaux are techniques better suited to the artificiality of theatre than to film, which rarely includes such verbal extravagances. In its original incarnation as a stage play, *Decadence* was performed with minimal sets, and shorn of extraneous characters. The temptation for any film adaptation of a play is to open it up, to make it fill a screen that suddenly seems a much larger space than even the Broadway stage. The problem is easily identifiable, but difficult to solve – *Look Back in Anger*, *True West*, *Come Back to the Five and Dime*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean* and *Steaming* all work as contained, often single-location plays, but such restrictiveness may not always fulfil the needs of cinema. On stage, David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* confined itself to the claustrophobic dog-eat-dog world of the real estate office, whereas James Foley's film felt compelled to add scenes, giving the characters lives beyond the office walls, but dissipating the intensity.

Decadence is most successful when it uses the techniques of cinema to complement the script's staginess, as in the scene when Steve is regaling a bored Helen over late dinner with smutty schoolboy stories of "dirty pranks", anal sex and a distant dad. Multiple arms flash in and out of the close-up on Berkoff's violently masticating face to pour wines and change plates. Owing much to refined slapstick devices, the action is sharply choreographed, using movement to supplement the verbal caricature, and thus freeing itself from its theatre origins with non-verbal grotesquery. At Helen's dinner party, the chattering classes spout chicken coos in place of conver-

sation; frenetic waiters deftly avoid collision; fast montage sequences screech to a halt with a freeze-frame.

The success of such an excessive style depends largely on the performances, and *Decadence* principally works because of Berkoff himself. He always has been – and will most likely remain – the performer most capable of realising his own idiosyncratic brand of physical acting. Berkoff appears inappropriately maniacal playing more traditional villains opposite Rambo, James Bond and the Krays – as if the films were big enough to contain his violent caricatures. When interpreting his own material, the phrase 'tour de force' springs inevitably to mind. As in the gentleman's club scene, in which Steve and his cronies vent their racism and down their gins, Berkoff often excels where others flounder. The coup here is the nonchalant revelation of Michael Winner as one of Steve's fellow clubbers, at once smug and self-parodying. The pity is, however, that Winner's delivery of the rapid-fire verse is neither sharp nor agile enough to participate in Berkoffian repartee.

Shortcomings, though, are at times the result of the writing. As the hard, aristocratic Helen, Joan Collins exudes generations of power; indulgence permeates every action, her gestures are precise and her speech duly clipped. As Sybil, on the other hand, she manages only an awkward, limp parody of a figure out of Leigh's *Abigail's Party*. Berkoff's superlative venom is reserved for the Belgravia set; Cheam is rather a juxtapositional necessity. Sybil and Les are repetitive caricatures, plotting the overthrow of the upper class in glitzy leisure clothes on a black and chrome suite. We (and Berkoff?) secretly want to return to the Wagnerian pomposity of Helen and Steve, however despicable, it may be.

The physicality, excess and stylisation are all drawn together in the manic, violent denouement at The Ivy restaurant. The upper classes' greed is unleashed in what looks like a version of *Monty Python's* 'Fattest Man in the World' sketch, or a homage to the finale of Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. As Steve fills every last gap with caviar, raw meat, cream and champagne, a society in the last throes of extreme decadence is spiralling to its end. Steve waltzes uncontrollably around the restaurant like a released balloon, propelled by his farts, before stopping to vomit behind the sofa. The Ivy ages before our eyes, sprouts cobwebs and decays, but Helen and Steve hardly notice the change. When it comes down to it, the Les's of this world can't bring themselves to destroy this existence; like the Roman Empire, it's left to kill itself. If this is "a political counterpoint, an alternative view of Thatcher's Britain" – as the publicity material would have one believe – then perhaps Les's weakness is resonant of the ultimate weakness of the film: Berkoff relishes decadence too much to issue its final sentence.

Stella Bruzzi

Desperate Remedies

New Zealand 1993

Directors: Stewart Main, Peter Wells

Certificate 15	Sound Recordists Graham Morris
Distributor Electric Pictures	Foley: Helen Luttrell
Production Company James Wallace Productions Ltd In association with The New Zealand Film Commission/Avalon NFU Studios/NZ on Air	Music: John Neill Nigel Foster Dolby stereo
Producer James Wallace	Sound Re-recordists Music: John Neill Michael Hedges
Associate Producer Trishia Downie	Foley Artist Craig Tomlinson
Avalon NFU Studios	Stunt Co-ordinator Robert Bruce
Production Executive Sue Thompson	
Production Manager Katherine Curtis	
Casting Chorus: Mari Adams	Cast Jennifer Ward-Lealand Dorothea Brook
Assistant Director Greg Stitt	Kevin Smith Lawrence Hayes
Screenplay Peter Wells Stewart Main	Lisa Chappell Anne Cooper
Director of Photography Leon Narbey In colour	Cliff Curtis Fraser
Camera Operator John Day	Michael Hurst William Poyser
Rostrum Camera Reiner Schoenbrunn	Kiri Mills Rose
Optical Effects Brian Scadden	Bridget Armstrong Mary Anne
Editor David Coulson	Timothy Raby Mr Weedle
Production Designer Michael Kane	Helen Steemson Gnits
Art Director Shane Radford	Geeling Ching Su Lim
2nd: Tony Forster	Kate Bartlett Johnny Bond
Scenic Artist Inia Taylor	Ann Coc-Kroft May Dalziel
Special Effects Jason Docherty	Alison du Fresne Tony Gallagher
Music/Music Director Peter Scholes	Richard Hanna Bruce Hopkins
Music Extracts "La forza del destino – overture and aria" by Giuseppe Verdi; "Un bal" from "Symphonie fantastique" by Hector Berlioz; "Emperor Waltz" by Johann Strauss	Ian Hughes Murray Keane
Music Performed by Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra Soprano: Carmel Carroll Violin Solo: Ludmilla Ignatieva Harp: Rebecca Harris	Irene Malone Andrew Kovacevich
Music Producers Chris Gough Sheryl Morris	Pete Mason Buzz Moller
Costume Design Glenis Foster	Mathew Sunderland Peter Tait
Wardrobe Hilary Neiderer	Annaliese Patten-Williams Chorus
Make-up/Hair Abby Collins Dominie Till	Dorothy Piripi Sam Williams
Sound Design Kit Rollings Don Paulin	Gordon Hatfield Michael Kem
Sound Manager John Neill	Thomas Tina Jack Chong
Dialogue Editor Mike Hopkins	Amon Nikora Dan Fantl
ADR Michael Hedges	Lauren Morcom Rua Acorn
	Dominico Mosca Sean Marshall
	Jacki Sims Amber Harris
	Ella Mizrahi Sam Smith
	Racheal Main Martyn Sanderson
	Maori Warriors and Townspeople Irene Malone
	Bar Singer

8,394 feet
93 minutes

In the imaginary 19th-century colonial port of Hope, an imperious red-veiled woman rushes to the dock and silently hands a handsome disembarking immigrant her card, offering him “a most singular opportunity”. She is Dorothea Brook, beautiful, independent and a ‘draper of distinction’ – but her life with her ‘companion’ Anne is being soured by her sister Rose’s opium habit and excessive sexual activity with her Latino supplier Fraser. Desperate to get Fraser out of her life, Dorothea plans to pay the young immigrant, Lawrence Hayes, to marry Rose. After much delay, Lawrence visits as instructed; in Dorothea’s absence, Anne demands references but refuses to tell him what the job is. William Poyser, an ambitious, unattractive MP, calls on Dorothea and hints that a contract for army uniforms may come her way. When his bank calls in his debts, he sees Dorothea as a solution and claims it will only be seemly for her to deal with the army if she becomes his wife.

An attempt to pay Fraser to leave fails. Lawrence reappears and, ignoring the class gulf between him and Dorothea, declares his passion for her. Disappointed to learn that the ‘job’ on offer is not as her kept man, he demands to meet Rose before agreeing to the marriage. In case the plan fails, Anne proposes bribing Fraser to sail for San Francisco two days hence. Visiting the opium den, Dorothea shows him the rubies he’ll receive if he goes, but he taunts her. Running into Lawrence, she enlists his help, and he suggests murdering Fraser instead.

Jealous at Dorothea’s attraction to Lawrence, Anne takes him the rubies in Dorothea’s place, hoping to discover his intentions. Disappointed that she isn’t Dorothea, Lawrence responds rudely. Anne agrees to let him meet Rose later that day, but warns Dorothea that Lawrence is not co-operating and urges her that it would be expedient to marry Poyser. Lawrence doesn’t turn up, and Dorothea rushes distraught into the streets. Unable to find him, she goes to Fraser’s room, unaware that Lawrence is hidden there and listening. Fraser taunts her about her past affair with him and her resulting abortion; Dorothea offers herself to him again if he will then leave, but he refuses. The two men fight; Lawrence, wounded, leaves Fraser on the ship to San Francisco but keeps the rubies. Claiming to have disposed of Fraser, he offers himself to Dorothea for money; she refuses and, in a passionate farewell, reveals she is marrying Poyser.

At a ball two years later, Dorothea is disturbed to meet Fraser, who insinuatingly tells her Lawrence kept the rubies. Lawrence writes with news that Rose and her child by Fraser have died of typhoid; again declaring his love for Dorothea, he encloses the rubies, formed into two rings. As the Poysers watch an opera, a red-veiled woman shoots Fraser dead in front of the stage. She is Anne. Declaring that she is now free, Dorothea leaves Poyser. At the docks, she is reunited with Anne.



Schlock in frocks: Lisa Chappell, Jennifer Ward-Lealand

Lawrence appears and, recognising her choice of partner, bids her farewell; Anne and Dorothea sail away together.

“This film is about transgression,” *Desperate Remedies*’ co-director Peter Wells pronounced *almost* seriously just before his lavish-looking £700,000 first feature unwound at the London Film Festival. After a decade as collaborators on documentaries and shorts, writer-directors Wells and Stewart Main have loosened their corsets with a sexy, queer spoof costume melodrama that’s better off without such stale self-justifications. At once luxuriantly overdressed and disconcertingly *deshabillé*, *Desperate Remedies* heaves with costumes and art direction that Gainsborough Studios would either have died for or died at the sight of – from Dorothea’s startling arrival at the docks in a swirling scarlet chiffon, to the closing homage to *Queen Christina* in which she and Anne sail away dressed in a ‘Scope-width of primary-coloured taffeta.

The film’s frenzied pace owes less to its deliberately disjointed plotting than to manic editing, frenetic frock changes – tartan, striped, puritanical, risqué – and, most hilariously, a frantic orchestral accompaniment from the Auckland Philharmonia which, at moments of high emotion, cuts from one famous movie score to another (often, bizarrely, the theme from *Jean de Florette*). Its thin claim to subversiveness is that it heaves with the erotic excesses which costume drama traditionally both promises and denies.

Standard-issue debauched dago Fraser has pierced nipples, a penchant for lace-edged French knickers and a habit of pleasuring the insatiable Rose under Dorothea’s nose while issuing dark threats about what the former might do if deprived of his “affections”. In Dorothea’s haughty encounters with the pouting, bare-chested Lawrence, the pair’s curt, class-ridden exchanges (“I believe the tradesman’s entrance is at the back!” she snaps) clash with languorous eye contact, while intercut shots of writhing flesh reveal their true desires. Even the sets ooze sensuality, from Dorothea’s red velvet drawing room to the orgiastic decadence of the ‘Chinese House’ opium den.

That *Desperate Remedies* succeeds as

something more than overblown camp spectacle is due to its exact understanding not just of genre conventions but of the ideology they represent. Its stock characters are at once pastiched to perfection by the excellent cast and thoroughly subverted. The wealthy, haughty, morally indignant heroine Dorothea has a past abortion to hide; the cool, Jane Austenish wit whom she’s rescued from the grind of governing is her lesbian lover; and the lustful opium fiend Frasier functions ambiguously as both arch-villain and exposé of the sexual hypocrisy of others. Kevin Smith is less successfully cast: the joke of a piece of *Querelle*-ish jailbait who acts more like a super-vacuous male model soon wears thin.

The S/M thrill inscribed in cross-class and inter-racial desire in the film’s models is hilariously foregrounded in Dorothea’s feverish whip-cracking during her carriage ride to the eroticised squalor of the docks to check out the disembarking male convict flesh. Her ostensibly high-minded motives – moral probity and the desire to ‘save’ her addicted sister – are undermined from the start by Fraser’s taunts about her hypocritical denial of her past (“You once regarded me in a less *gothic* light,” he sneers), the overt sexuality of her costumes and numerous double entendres. “I need a man,” she explains to Lawrence when elaborating her enigmatic work offer – whereupon sounds of female orgasm can be heard in the background.

The cumulative effect is to make costume melodrama’s classic preoccupations with strict social hierarchy and sexual propriety seem hilariously gratuitous, irrational and redundant. But *Desperate Remedies*’ self-conscious reinvention of the genre’s pleasures is also its shortcoming: for all its verve and visual excess, it’s ultimately a one-joke parody which never makes the imaginative transgression into, say, the deep cod-historical weirdness of Canada’s Guy Maddin. Its ironic achievement is to end up looking more authentic than the real thing: Hope’s sweaty, dirty docks with their slaves and rough sex make Hitchcock’s recreation of Sydney Harbour in the recently restored *Under Capricorn* look like the tacky toy-town model it probably was.

Claire Monk



The Hour of the Pig

United Kingdom/France 1993

Director: Leslie Megahey

Certificate
15
Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment
Production Company
BBC/CiBy 2000
With the participation of British Screen Finance/The European Co-production Fund
Executive Producers
Michael Wearing
CiBy 2000:
Claudine Sainderichin
Producer
David M. Thompson
Associate Producer
Dave Edwards
Production Executive
Jill Pack
Co-ordinator
CiBy 2000:
Aude Girard
Production Managers
David Mason
France:
Jean-Claude Charrat
Location Manager
France:
Jean-Michel Ardoin
Casting
Joyce Nettles
France:
A'Capella
Assistant Directors
Pip Short
Lindsay Trenholme
Debbi Slater
Keith Mason
Screenplay
Leslie Megahey
Director of Photography
John Hooper
In colour
Camera Operators
Nigel Willoughby
2nd Unit:
Philip Sindall
France 2nd Unit:
Ian Punter
Marc Falchier
Steadicam Operators
France:
Jacques Monge
Bernard Wutrich
Editor
Isabelle Dedieu
Production Designer
Bruce Macadie
Art Directors
Jane Broomfield
France:
Jacques Mollon
UK:
Jane Shepherd
Scenic Artists
Brian Hunt
Peter Nurse
Special Effects
Stuart Brisdon
Special Effects Technician
John Van Der Pool
Music
Alexandre Desplat
Period Music
William Lyons and the Dufay Collective
Songs
"Quaint Voi en la fin d'este" from "Medieval Songs and Dances", performed by St Georges Canzona, Counter-Tenor: Derek Harrison
Choreography
Jane Gibson
Deborah Pope
Costume Design
Anna Buruma
Wardrobe Supervisor
Lyn Avery
Make-up Design
Jan Sewell

Make-up Artists
Victoria Voller
Darren Phillips
France:
Catherine Bruchon
Chantal Antoine
Title Design
Plume Partners
Opticals
The Optical Partnership
Westbury Design and Optical
Sound Editor
Joe Walker
Dialogue Editor
Stephen Young
Sound Recordists
Daniel Brisseau
ADR/Foley:
Ted Swanscott
Music:
John Timmerley
Gérard Chiron
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordist
Paul Hamblin
Sound Effects Editor
Chris Hainstock
Digital Effects
Andy Kennedy
Foley Artists
Julie Ankerson
John Fewell
Stunt Co-ordinator
Mario Luraschi
Stunts
Lesley Garanson
Pascal Guégan
Pascal Madura
Animal Handlers
Joe Henson
Wayne Docksey

Cast
Colin Firth
Richard Courtois
Ian Holm
Albertus
Donald Pleasence
Pincheon
Amina Annabi
Samira
Nicol Williamson
Seigneur Jehan d'Auferre
Michael Gough
Magistrate Boniface
Harriet Walter
Jeannine
Jim Carter
Mathieu
Lysette Anthony
Filette d'Auferre
Justin Chadwick
Gérard d'Auferre
SophieDix
Maria
Michael Cronin
Dark Stranger
Elizabeth Spriggs
Madame Langlois
Emil Wolk
Print Seller
Vincent Grass
Bailliff Labatier
Raoul Delfosse
Blind Georges
Jean-Pierre Stewart
Sheriff
Dave Atkins
Vallièrre
FrançoisLalande
Builder
Vernon Dobtcheff
Apothecary
Sami Bouajila
Mahmoud
Joanna Dunham
Lady Catherine d'Auferre
Peter Hudson
Sheriff's Officer

Charles Dale
Gordon Langford Rowe
Witnesses
Judy Pascoe
Roy Evans
RobertPutt
Travelling Players
Ralph Nossek
Poiccard
Melissa Wilks
Young Girl
David Larkin
Young Boy

Patricia Psaltopoulos
Peasant Woman
Alain Blazquez
Cuckolded Man
Isabelle Marcoz
Marie-Pierre Cascales
Women in Coach
Jean-Jacques Charliot
Roger Landrier

10,526 feet
117 minutes

Abbeville, a rural town in the Ponthieu region of medieval France. Idealistic young lawyer Richard Courtois arrives from Paris with his clerk Mathieu to serve as defence attorney in cases brought by the local prosecutor Pincheon. He finds a community riddled with prejudice and superstition, cynically exploited by the priest Albertus and the powerful landowner Seigneur Jehan d'Auferre. Successfully negotiating the acquittal of a peasant accused of murder, Courtois finds his next case more complex: he rescues Jeannine, a woman accused of witchcraft, from all civil charges only to see her condemned to death by local Church ordinance against which he has no authority. To his fury, he is then required to defend a pig against a murder charge; a Jewish boy has been killed, and it is obvious to Courtois that the animal has been accused in order to protect the real culprit. He refuses to take on such an absurd assignment.

The pig belongs to gypsies who have settled nearby despite fears among the townsfolk that they are heathens and plague-carriers. Samira, a beautiful gypsy girl, offers Courtois every inducement to protect the pig, their only valuable possession. Although he is enjoying an affair with Maria, a servant girl at the inn where he is staying until a house has been constructed for him, he finds Samira difficult to refuse. He is also under pressure from d'Auferre, who has him in mind as a permanent replacement to Pincheon, at an astronomical salary; d'Auferre is similarly keen to get the pig case settled quickly. Courtois is introduced to d'Auferre's son Gérard, a precocious youth with a passion for hunting, and to d'Auferre's daughter Filette, who is available for matrimony, complete with substantial dowry. Courtois finds that wherever he goes he is under surveillance from an unknown man he assumes to be in d'Auferre's employment. Failing to persuade Samira to accept enough money to buy two replacement pigs, Courtois attempts to have the case dismissed, but Pincheon and the local magistrate Boniface insist that the trial goes ahead.

Exercising his *droit de seigneur*, d'Auferre appoints himself as judge to the proceedings. Although it is clear to Courtois that the witnesses have been well rehearsed, while the discovery of another child's remains indicates the pig's unarguable innocence, a verdict against the animal is only postponed by the bells of Advent. During the recess, Courtois rescues a stable-boy from attack by an unknown horseman, who turns on him but is driven away

by the watching stranger, later identified as a spy for the Inquisition. Prompted by hints from Albertus who, through confessional, knows the truth, Courtois confronts d'Auferre, who admits that Gérard is the miscreant and has now been sent to England for treatment. The pig, however, must still die to protect the family name from scandal. Accepting the charade for Samira's sake, Courtois produces a new pig in court, with witnesses swearing to its guilt, and Samira's pig is exonerated. Determined to return to Paris, Courtois is unable to persuade Samira to go with him. Mathieu also stays behind to work with Pincheon. As Courtois leaves by wagon, a knight in shining armour arrives at Abbeville, as predicted by Jeannine on the scaffold, his body bearing the plague-sores of the Black Death.

Part whodunnit, part rustic comedy and part historical pageant, *The Hour of the Pig* embraces its opportunities with an enthusiastic but precarious grasp, seemingly reluctant to decide on a main argument. Opening with the enjoyably bizarre spectacle of a last-minute reprieve for a donkey on a scaffold, released "without a stain to her character" as her quaking owner is briskly hanged, the film seems prepared for a series of macabre amusements based on the premise that animals were often brought to judgement in the Middle Ages. In belated reinforcement of this theme, an end title records that more than 90 such trials occurred in France between 1403 and 1596 (although Geoffrey Cush's play *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, recently staged in London, shows a continuation of the custom well into the 1790s). But there have been too many diversions by this point for the film to provide a convincingly typical instance. Instead, the pig itself – while a handsome enough example of reportedly Iron Age pedigree – has been largely obscured by the intervening intrigues, seductions and power struggles, as well as being abruptly marginalised by a more significant agenda, the arrival of the Black Death. Despite its claims, the one thing the film does not do is explain how animals were for centuries seriously subjected to legal constraints (notoriously, a swarm of locusts was once tried in absentia) when none of the participants on this occasion, including the bribed witnesses, regard the proceedings as anything but an elaborate farce.

Since the pig's innocence is not an issue, the plot turns on the identity of the real murderer. Although he is a glaringly obvious culprit in emerald blue, with an unhealthy interest in butcher-birds and an inherited taste for the hunting of human prey, his unmasking is delayed by a number of contrivances, notably the sinister if mostly irrelevant presence of a spy for the Inquisition. Lurking among the shadows, the so-called Dark Stranger might more suitably observe the misbehaviour of the local priest than

prowl around the indiscretions of the young lawyer, but at least he is available to scare off the opposition when most needed. Less useful is the obscure Cathar sect, much given to hoods and masonic ceremonies, through which the Seigneur maintains his grip on the whole neighbourhood. But hints of Hellfire Club depravity are soon dispelled by the revelation that the brotherhood's chief concern is the control of grain prices. Glumly perplexed by such distractions, the lawyer's sleuthing does little to uncover what seems an open secret until – by extreme coincidence – he intervenes in the killer's latest abduction. Even then, he has to be all but told the man's name by the priest who, much like the rest of us, has known it all along.

Adding to the muddle of events, the film is cluttered with disconnected moments and interludes, as when the disembodied voice of the Seigneurs suddenly invites the lawyer to a party, or when there is an unresolved discussion about a possible reference to a servant-girl's anatomy. In one sequence, as the lawyer and the gypsy stroll by the river, unknown silhouettes watch them from the bushes while a sword is drawn and a youth scrambles in terror among the trees – hotly pursued by the camera but not, apparently, by anybody else. In occasional bursts of luridly entertaining fantasy, we share the lawyer's dreams, where naked couples are chased by horsemen, blood sprinkles his pillow, and half the cast wanders waist-high in water. Another meaningless omen is provided by the falling candle which sets light to the papers on his desk, the resulting blaze promptly extinguished by a toppling mug of wine; as well he might, the lawyer studies this apparently supernatural vandalism with a dull inscrutability.

Magnificently served by his production designers, Leslie Megahey can be forgiven for allowing his debut feature script to stray, with intricate humour, along such vivid but ill-defined pathways. The fun of *The Hour of the Pig* is mostly to be had from the contrast between its plausible costumes and settings and the inescapable anachronism of its performers, wonderfully familiar as they are – the furtive glances of Ian Holm, the eye-rolling sardonicism of Donald Pleasence, the lofty drawl of Michael Gough. Effortlessly dominant is the welcome, if slightly battered, Nicol Williamson, shamelessly mugging his despair over an appalling daughter and exerting, with icy gaze and rat-trap mouth, an unequivocal authority over the entire drama. Settling for broad comedy, despite the potentialities of the text, the players seem to have decided on a *Carry On Canterbury Tales* approach, encouraged by Megahey's Greenaway-like inclination to fill the screen with nudes and lewds at every turn. The result is a tangle of ribaldry and half-told tales, promising more than it can deliver, a not inexcusable waste of a colourful panoply of talents.

Philip Strick

Jack Be Nimble

New Zealand 1992

Director: Garth Maxwell

Certificate

18

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Essential Productions Ltd

In association with

The New Zealand Film Commission

Executive Producers

Murray Newey

John Barnett

Producers

Jonathan Dowling

Kelly Rogers

Associate Producer

Judith Trye

Production Co-ordinator

Therese Curran

Unit Manager

Danny Riem

2nd Unit Director

Murray Newey

Assistant Directors

Robin Murphy

Martin Walsh

Kara Dodson

Screenplay

Garth Maxwell

Additional Material:

Rex Pilgrim

Director of Photography

Donald Duncan

In colour

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Rewa Harre

2nd Unit Rostrum Camera

Reiner Schoenbrunn

Camera Operator

Mark Olsen

Editor

John Gilbert

Production Designer

Grant Major

Art Director

Jackie Gilmore

Scenic Artists

Annette Patrick

Harry Wong

Brett Schwetters

Special Effects

Kevin Chisnall

SPFX Models Maker

Chris Fitzpatrick

Music

Chris Neal

Costume Design

Ngila Dickson

Wardrobe Supervisor

Janis MacEwan

Make-up Designer

Viv Mepham

Make-up/Hair

Debra East

Prosthetics

Marjorie Hamlin

Opticals

Brian Scadden

Sound Editors

Dick Reade

Paul Stent

Graeme Myhre

Psychic Voices

Raymond Hawthorne

Douglas George

Brenda Kendall

Peter Tait

Hester Joyce

Meryl Main

Mike Mizrahi

Johnny Caracciolo

Paula Sanchez

Kelly Rogers

Lucy Sheenan

Meremere Penfold

Sound Recordist

Dick Reade

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Gethin Creagh

Stunt Co-ordinator

Peter Bell

Stunt Doubles

Bruce Brown

Mark Harris

Gail Scorrar

Sarah Cootes

Cast

Alexis Arquette

Jack

Sarah Smuts-Kennedy

Dora

Bruno Lawrence

Teddy

Tony Barry

Clarrie

Elizabeth Hawthorne

Clarrie's Wife

Brenda Simmons

Mrs Birch

Gilbert Goldie

Mr Birch

Tricia Phillips

Anne

Paul Minifie

Kevin

Sam Smith

Little Jack

Hannah Jessop

Little Dora

Nicholas Antwis

Jack aged 7

Olivia Jessop

Dora aged 8

Kristen Seth

Amber Woolston

Tracey Brown

Wendy Adams

Older Sister

Nina Lopez

Beth Morrison

Ella Brasella

Joanna Morrison

Middle Sister

Amy Morrison

Victoria Spence

Joanna Morrison

Ella Brasella

Younger Sister

Ricky Plester

Young Sean

Rohan Stace

Sean

Bridget Armstrong

Typing Teacher

Bridget Donovan

Carlene

Caroline Lowry

Trish

Paula Jones

Tina

Rebekah Mercer

Shannon Grey

Schoolgirls

Tina Frantzen

Vicky Haughton

Matrons

Helen Medlyn

Orphanage Nurse

Grant McFarland

Metalwork Teacher

Celia Nicholson

Motel Woman

Chris Auchinvole

Gordon

Peter Bell

Thief

Kaash

Eric Williams

Taxi Drivers

8,593 feet

95 minutes

New Zealand. After their mother has a nervous breakdown, largely brought about by their father's philandering, Jack and Dora, two young children, are deposited in an orphanage, and end up being adopted by different families. Dora is taken to live with a kindly, middle-aged couple, deep in the heart of suburbia, while Jack finds himself in a grim farmhouse with tyrannical step-parents. As he grows up, he is taunted by his step-sisters, made to work hard at menial tasks, and faces random, brutal punishment from his stepfather for any perceived misdemeanour. Dora's childhood is also unhappy. She is constantly thinking of her brother. In a typing lesson, when she is supposed to be drafting a specimen business letter, she writes to him instead. The teacher victimises her, reading her letter aloud to the rest of the class. On the way home, when she is teased by her school mates, she gets into a scrap, and almost dies when she is pushed off a precipice by one of her assailants.

One evening at supper, after his step-parents have upbraided him for his poor college results, Jack fetches the piece of equipment he has been building in metalwork – an electrical appliance which somehow hypnotises the entire family. Jack leads his stepfather, still in a trance, to the middle of a country road, and causes him to be mown down by a bus. Jack then makes his stepmother imagine she is a cat, and causes her to drown in a river. Leaving his step-sisters asleep, Jack heads off to town with the vague intention of finding his long-lost sister. Dora, meanwhile, has discovered she is psychic. With the assistance of her much older boyfriend, Teddy, she manages to track Jack down. They have an emotional reunion, but she is alarmed by his bitterness and tendency to violence. Teddy and Jack take an immediate dislike to each other.

Jack wants Dora to go with him in pursuit of their parents. She agrees, helping steal Teddy's car keys. They track down their mother, now re-married, in a small town, and Jack forces her to admit she never loved them. Dora has been hearing voices in her head. Jack's step-parents are in contact with her from beyond the grave, and want revenge. His four step-sisters have already set out in pursuit of him, and have tracked down and killed Dora's blind stepmother. Jack and Dora, next visit their father, an overweight man with a weak heart and a drink problem. He is unsympathetic, and Jack reacts by hypnotising him and making him do a thousand sit-ups, knowing the effort will kill him. He and Dora drive out into the open country.

After a chase, the step-sisters overtake Jack and Dora, forcing them off the road. Knocked unconscious, Dora wakes to find Jack gone. She rushes back to Teddy and asks for his help in finding her brother. Teddy takes her to the farmhouse where Jack was brought up. There, somebody leaps out from behind a door and slits Teddy's throat. Dora flees into the back yard, where

she is confronted by the four sisters. Driven on by the spirit of their dead parents, they try to kill her. But Dora proves psychically too strong for them, and is able to turn their malevolence on themselves. Once the sisters are all dead, she rushes into the woods, where she finds Jack hanging bound and gagged from a tree. She lets him down, but it is too late to save him.

After several months, Dora is now pregnant, and is being looked after by her mother. By the nursery rhyme she sings, she makes it apparent she believes the child she is carrying is, in fact, Jack.

New Zealand, judging by the way it has depicted itself in recent films, must be a daunting place. Peter Jackson's *Braindead* suggested a land full of murderous zombies; Alison Maclean's *Crush* showed a soggy, grey country, with dark emotions simmering away as turbulently as the geysers of Hell's Kitchen. Now writer-director Garth Maxwell's debut feature adds to the litany: this latest slice of 'New Zealand Gothic' is a mercurial, grisly modern fairy tale, which skips across genres with alacrity, borrowing from Hollywood and art-house cinema alike. Despite its obvious, polite nods in the direction of Jane Campion, its influences, according to Maxwell, also include *The Silence Of The Lambs* and Edgar Allan Poe, and it manages to combine elements of the horror film, the road movie and the suspense thriller with a lyrical, if brutal, evocation of childhood. The script was apparently inspired by a story Maxwell once heard about a boy who was beaten with barbed wire. With such an image at its core, it's little wonder that *Jack Be Nimble* errs on the bleak side. The mood of foreboding is evident right from the opening shot, where a storm is brewing, and a mother's sense of nervous anxiety seems to affect the landscape itself. As she approaches the end of her tether, her two little children sit huddled inside, waiting for the worst to happen.

We start on familiar ground. This appears to be another anguished family fable about a brother and sister separated from their parents, and then from each other, at an early age. Predictably, the narrative bifurcates as Jack and Dora are taken into different



Southern Gothic: Alexis Arquette

foster families, and their personalities change to fit their new environments: one child is hardened and made bitter by his experiences while the other withdraws into a cocoon. Thematically, *Jack Be Nimble* sometimes seems like a rustic counterpart to Alan Rudolph's *Equinox*, where the two main characters, who are twins, also lose track of each other in infancy, and only come together as the film ends. As in Rudolph's picture, there is an emphasis on symmetry and balance, with frequent cutting between the two stories to emphasise moments where the children's lives correspond. For instance, when Dora is given a birthday cake with a toy pig on the icing, Jack is simultaneously being forced by his stepfather to watch a real pig be slaughtered. Maxwell has described the siblings as being "like two halves of one personality," and deliberately makes their lives mirror each other. The film differs from *Equinox*, though, in that the duo are re-united relatively early on. Having found each other, they must search for their parents.

As in *An Angel At My Table*, there is a seamless transition from childhood to adolescence, with youthful actors giving way to the stars, Alex Arquette (he of the famous sisters) and Sarah Smuts-Kennedy. Even if there is nothing very original about the material, Maxwell handles it all delicately enough, at least in the early scenes. However, as *Jack Be Nimble* progresses, and as he foregrounds the bloody, supernatural elements in the script, the film loses much of its subtlety. Rather than offering a sympathetic account of Jack's plight, he begins to crank the picture up into a full-blown revenge tragedy. His attempts at leavening his grim tale with a little humour backfire: the comedy ends up undermining the horror, and vice versa. His ambivalent attitude is highlighted in the acting: whereas the three leads, Arquette, Smuts-Kennedy and Bruno Lawrence, play for 'real', giving intense, humourless performances, the supporting cast offer cheerfully overblown caricatures. Nemesis, for instance, comes to Jack in the unlikely shape of his four step-sisters, who bear more than a passing resemblance to St Trinians fourth formers, and look as if they should be armed with lacrosse sticks. Jack's brooding, bad-tempered stepfather is likewise a virtual pantomime figure. The gallows humour is certainly intentional, and there are moments – notably when Jack hypnotises his step-parents and lures them to unlikely deaths – where it works wonderfully well. Still, if Maxwell's intention is, as he rather grandly puts it in the production notes, "to confront issues of the beast and violence in humanity," you can't help feeling he is shooting himself in the foot by being so light-hearted about it. Leaping hither and thither, shifting mood and style with alarming frequency, *Jack Be Nimble* may underline Maxwell's quicksilver imagination, but it's hardly a coherent piece of work.

Geoffrey Macnab

54 | 2 SIGHT AND SOUND

Lan Fengzheng (The Blue Kite)

Hong Kong/China 1992

Director: Tian Zhuangzhuang

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

ICA

Production Company

Longwick Film
Production
(Hong Kong)/Beijing
Film Studio

Line Producers

Luo Guiping
Cheng Yongping
Production Manager
Wang Liansheng

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Chi Xiaoning

Assistant Directors

He Jianjun
Zhang Weiyong

Screenplay

Xiao Mao

Director of Photography

Hou Yong
In colour

Editor

Qian Lengle

Art Director

Zhang Xiande

Sets

Wang Zesheng

Set Decorators

Zhu Baosheng

Explosives

Wang Zhanxiang

Music

Yoshihide Otomo

Music Performed by

Shuichi Chino
Oh Akioka

Kumiko Takara

Masahiro Uemura

Ryoji Hojito

Yoshihide Otomo

Shigenori Noda

Costume Design

Dong Juying

Wardrobe

Zhang Xiaoin

Lu Baozhong

Make-up

Hao Xia

Wu Yeyao

Titles

Malin Post

Takaaki Moriyama

Yoshiharu Watanabe

Tetsuo Ohya

Sachiyo Ogawa

Sound Recordists

Wu Ling

Music:

Yoshiaki Kondo

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Mikio Mori

Sound Re-recordists

Nikkatsu Sound Studio

Koshiroh Jinbo

Sinichi Itoh

Gikoh Nakayama

Makato Ohno

Hiroshi Yamagata

Kyoji Kohno

Shinji Tanaka

Mototaka Kusakabe

Sound Effects

Sun Kai

Cast

Yi Tian

Tietou as an infant

Zhang Wenya

Tietou as a child

Chen Xiaoman

Tietou as a teenager

Lu Liping

Mum (Chen Shujuan)

Pu Quanxin

Dad (Lin Shaolong)

Li Xuejian

Uncle Li (Li Guodong)

Guo Baosheng

Stepfather (Lao Wu)

Zhong Ping

Chen Shusheng

Chu Quanzhong

Chen Shuyan

Song Xiaoying

Sis

Zhang Hong

Zhu Ying

Liu Yanjin

Shujuan's Mother

Li Bin

Granny

Lu Zhong

Mrs Lan

Guo Donglin

Lin Yunwei

Wu Shumin

Street Committee

Officer

Zhang Fengyi

Xu Min

Zhang Ju

Ding Jiali

Jiang Gengchen

Chen Hong

12,420 feet

138 minutes

Subtitles



Soldier Blue: Zhang Hong

munal co-operative. Mao Tse-Tung announces the Rectification Movement ("Let a hundred flowers bloom"), encouraging criticism to rid the Party of complacency. Among those who respond are Shuyan, complaining about the exam system at his school, and Liu Yunwei, a colleague of Shaolong's at the library. Liu associates both Shaolong and Li Guodong with his criticism, although they weren't present at the meeting. Shusheng's girlfriend Zhu Ying, a performer in the Army Song and Dance Troupe, objects to being expected to attend dances (and, by implication, to have sex) with top Party leaders. Those who criticised are denounced as 'Rightists' and punished. Under pressure, Li Guodong dissociates himself from Shaolong and Tiu Yunwei, both of whom are sent to labour camps. Shuyan is banished to work on the land. Zhu Ying is first made to work in a factory, then imprisoned as a counter-revolutionary. Shusheng, who has contracted an eye disease that threatens his career, is powerless to help her. The Great Leap Forward is announced, and everybody melts down kitchen implements to help steel production. Tietou enjoys the upheavals, but Shujuan struggles to survive in Shaolong's absence. A letter arrives: Shaolong has died in a forestry accident.

Li Guodong, guilt-ridden over his part in Shaolong's fate, helps support Shujuan. Tietou adores Guodong, and eventually Shujuan marries him; but, overworked and undernourished, he dies of a liver complaint. Shujuan and Tietou move in with her mother, Sis and Shusheng, now almost blind. Sis finds Shujuan a new husband, Wu Leisheng, an elderly senior party member. Both Shujuan and Tietou are unhappy and Tietou gets into fights at school. When the Cultural Revolution breaks out he happily joins in humiliating the school principal. Wu Leisheng, knowing the Red Guard will come for him, tells Shujuan to divorce him. She agrees reluctantly, having

grown to feel affection for him, and returns with Tietou to her mother's house, where Shuyan is back from the country with a peasant fiancée, Guiha. Zhu Ying is released but, broken by her experiences, refuses to marry Shusheng. Sis is denounced and humiliated. Worried about Wu, Shujuan goes to his house and finds him, seriously ill, under attack by the Red Guard. She tries to intervene, and is herself arrested. Tietou, rushing wildly to her aid, is brutally beaten up. Wu dies in custody and Shujuan is sent to a labour camp as a counter-revolutionary.

With *Horse Thief*, his first film to gain widespread distribution outside China, Tian Zhuangzhuang established himself as a leading member of the 'Fifth Generation' of Chinese directors. Since then his reputation has faded beside those of his contemporaries Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou. *The Blue Kite* should restore him to his rightful place.

In terms of narrative, though, the new film has little in common with the exotic, even hermetic otherness of *Horse Thief*, with its minimalist dialogue and mystical Tibetan rituals. Within Chinese-language cinema, the nearest parallel to *The Blue Kite* might be the Taiwanese family sagas of Hou Hsiao-hsien: *A City of Sadness*, or *The Time to Live and the Time to Die*. Like Hou's films, *The Blue Kite* reflects the trials and upheavals of an era through the vicissitudes of one family, showing how the arbitrary stupidities of political dogma attack and erode the modest structures of human happiness.

The kite of the title stands – perhaps just a touch too obviously – for this personal happiness, at once joyful and perilously fragile. We first see it being flown for the infant Tietou by Shaolong; later Tietou himself, a disaffected adolescent, finds unexpected pleasure in flying it for his young step-niece Niu-niu. When, like most kites, it gets caught in a tree, he promises to make her another, but events overtake him.

In the final scene, lying bruised and bleeding on the ground, his mother dragged off by the Red Guards, Tietou looks up and sees the kite's tattered remains dangling from the branches.

The Blue Kite is a film about trust betrayed: the trust of people who believed in a wise and benevolent leadership. At the wedding, the assembled company happily bow to Mao's portrait and sing, "On the peaceful soil of the Motherland life gets better every day". But already the omens are gathering. Shaolong's friend – and future unwilling betrayer – Guodong brings the couple a clay horse, symbol of prosperity; as he puts it down, the head breaks off. From now on, at each twist and lurch of the Great Helmsman's erratic steering, another fragment of the family's warm, communal togetherness will be destroyed.

Yet the film, though moving, isn't depressing. Throughout, despite everything, there are still moments of tenderness and even joy. At the start of the film, alone for the first time after the wedding, Shaolong lifts his bride and whirls her round in an impulse of giddy delight. Towards the end, Tietou asks Shujuan what makes her happy; she replies, "Being with you." Happiness is personal, small-scale and doggedly resilient. "Are people still getting married in times like these?" asks Wu in bitter disbelief. But they are, even if it's only Shuyan and his foolish bride, with her red cheeks (as Tietou rudely observes) "like a monkey's arse".

Though full of anger (Xiao Mao's script is based on Tian's own family history), the film never preaches or lectures. Indeed, some allusions are subtle enough to escape non-Chinese audiences. This is said to be the first film to refer to the practice of requiring attractive female soldiers to have sex with Party bosses, but the reference is oblique enough to be missed. And it's never stated that what kills Guodong is the famine caused by Mao's disastrous Great Leap Forward. Most likely there are other nuances that will pass a Western viewer by, but the overwhelming emotional thrust of the film is universal in its impact.

By filtering his story through a child's perspective (it's Tietou who provides the running voice-over), Tian Zhuangzhuang combines lucidity of vision with a novelistic richness and complexity of narrative. These qualities are matched by the visuals, subtly framed and lit by Tian's cinematographer Hou Yong, whose domestic interiors often have the quiet luminosity of Vermeer. Tian draws from his actors performances of total, undemonstrative conviction; as Shujuan, Lu Liping holds the still centre of the action with limpid grace. Perhaps not surprisingly, *The Blue Kite* has aroused the fury of the Chinese authorities: denied an exit visa, Tian was forced to complete his final edit at long distance, and has yet to see his own finished film. In a back-handed way, there could hardly be a greater tribute to the power and truth of his work.

Philip Kemp

Beijing, 1953. Librarian Lin Shaolong and schoolteacher Chen Shujuan are about to marry, but the ceremony is delayed when Stalin's death is announced. Ten days later, they celebrate their marriage along with members of Shujuan's family: her mother, her older sister 'Sis' (a confirmed Marxist and widow of a revolutionary hero) and her brothers Shusheng, an army officer, and Shuyan, an art student. Shaolong's friend and colleague, Li Guodong, also attends.

Shaolong and Shujuan move into an apartment in a courtyard building owned by Mrs Lan. Their son Lin Dayu, known as Tietou, grows up in the bustling world of the courtyard – which, in accordance with Party doctrine, Mrs Lan has turned into a com-

Malice	
USA 1993	
Director: Harold Becker	
Certificate 15	
Distributor Rank	
Production Company	
Castle Rock Entertainment	
In association with New Line Cinema	
Executive Producers	
Michael Hirsh Patrick Loubert	
Co-executive Producer	
Peter Brown	
Producers	
Rachel Pfeffer Charles Mulvehill Harold Becker	
Associate Producer	
Thomas Mack	
Production Co-ordinators	
Melissa Cooper	
Boston:	
Dorothy Aufiero	
Unit Production Manager	
Stephen Lim	
Location Managers	
Steph Benseman Robin Citrin	
Casting	
Nancy Klopner	
Boston:	
Colinge/Pickman	
Assistant Directors	
Thomas Mack David Kelley C.C. Barnes	
Screenplay	
Aaron Sorkin Scott Frank	
Story	
Aaron Sorkin Jonas McCord	
Director of Photography	
Gordon Willis	
Colour	
Technicolor prints by Technicolor	
Camera Operator	
Lou Barlia	
Steadicam Operators	
Randy Nolen Rusty Geller	
Video/Computer Supervisor	
Liz Radley	
24 Frame Video Operator	
Frederick Talmage	
Special Visual Effects	
Matte World	
Opticals	
Pacific Title	
Computer Graphics	
Rick Whitfield	
Editor	
David Bretherton	
Production Designer	
Philip Harrison	
Art Director	
Dianne Wager	
Art Department Supervisor	
Tom Warren	
Art Department Co-ordinator	
Linda King	
Set Design	
Sidney Litwack Alan Manzer Hugo Santiago Harold Fuhrman	
Set Decorators	
Garrett Lewis	
Boston:	
Tracey Doyle	
Set Dressers	
Gary Isbell Scott Garrett William Derham Donald Chafey Jnr Michael Driscoll	
Illustrator	
Sherman Labby	
Special Effects Supervisor	
Cliff Wenger	
Special Effects	
Eric Roberts John Downey	
Music/Music Director	
Jerry Goldsmith	
Orchestrations	
Alexander Courage	
Music Editor	
Kenneth Hall	
Song Consultant	
Alan Mason	
Songs	
"Mama Told Me Not to Come" by Randy Newman, performed by The Wolfgang Press; "Slave to Love" by and performed by Bryan Ferry; "Little Miss Can't Be Wrong" by and performed by Spin Doctors; "Miss You" by Greg Phillinganes, Bobby Colomby, Eric Clapton, performed by Eric Clapton; "My Funny Valentine" by Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, performed by Gene Harris	
Costume Design	
Michael Kaplan	
Costume Supervisors	
Mari Grimaud Darryl Levine	
Key Make-up Artist	
Bob Mills	
Make-up Artist	
David Forrest	
Key Hair Stylist	
Judy Cory	
Hair Stylist	
Barbara Lorenz	
Title Design	
Pablo Ferro	
Titles	
Title House	
Supervising Sound Editor	
David E. Stone	
Sound Editors	
Warren Hamilton Jnr Julia Eversshade Michael J. Benavente Martin Maryska Ed Callahan Richard King	
Supervising ADR Editor	
Mary Andrews	
ADR Group Co-ordinator	
Leigh French	
Foley Editors	
Christopher Flick Vanessa Theme Ament	
Sound Recordists	
Robert Eber Jack Keller David A. Behle Diane M.G. Moore	
Music:	
Bruce Botnick	
ADR Recordists	
Thomas J. O'Connell Rick Canelli	
Foley Recordists	
Robert Deschaine David Jobe	
Dolby stereo	
Sound Re-recordists	
Robert J. Litt Elliot Tyson Greg P. Russell	
Sound Effects	
Patricio Libenson Ezra Dweck	
Foley Artists	
Vanessa Theme Ament Hilda Ann Hodges	
Technical Adviser	
Matt Clancy	
Stunt Co-ordinator	
Chuck Waters	
Cast	
Alec Baldwin	
Doctor Jed Hill	
Nicole Kidman	
Tracy Safian	
Bill Pullman	
Andy Safian	

Bebe Neuwirth	Ken Cheeseman
Detective Dana Harris	Code Blue Operator
George C. Scott	Richard Rho
Doctor Kessler	Anaesthesiologist
Anne Bancroft	Joshua Malina
Mrs Kennsinger	Resident
Peter Gallagher	Christine Wheeler
Dennis Riley	Scrub Nurse
Josef Sommer	Sharon Albright
Lester Adams	Circulating Nurse
Tobin Bell	Tom Kemp
Earl Leemus	Bartender
William Duff-Griffin	Robin Joss
Doctor George Sullivan	Patricia Dunnock
Debrah Farentino	Dart Players
Tanya	Brenda Strong
Gwyneth Paltrow	Claudia
Paula Bell	Michael Bofshever
DavidBowe	Desk Sergeant
Doctor Matthew Robertson	Laura Langdon
Diana Bellamy	Desk Clerk
Ms Worthington	David Candreva
MichaelHatt	Cab Driver
Neighbour Boy	Ann Cusack
Paula Plum	Waitress
Neighbour Boy's Mother	
Sara Melson	
Girl on Bike	

Westerly, Massachusetts. A young girl on a bike is attacked, and is later rushed to hospital where her life is saved by glamorous new intern Dr Jed Hill. Having interviewed a girl student whose grades are slipping, college dean Andy Safian returns home to his new wife Tracy. Faced with a heavy estimate to re-plumb their recently acquired home, they decide that the only way they can afford it is by taking in a lodger. Andy runs into Jed, who turns out to be a former student acquaintance, and offers him the room. The doctor moves in and proceeds to lead a disruptively noisy sex life. Meanwhile, Tracy is suffering from occasional but severe stomach cramps and Jed recommends a Boston doctor for a second opinion.

On the day of her deadline meeting, Andy's student fails to show up and he decides to drive to her house, where he finds her dead body in the garden. While he is under investigation as a suspect, Tracy has a cramp attack in the shower. Jed finds her unconscious and calls an ambulance. Tracy has had a miscarriage and having removed one infected ovary, Jed diagnoses that Tracy's other one could potentially cause 'toxic shock', or else right itself. Jed consults the waiting Andy, who agrees to Jed's suggestion that they remove it. When she recovers, Tracy is furious and decides that she cannot forgive Andy and that she will sue the

hospital for one million dollars. At the legal confrontation between the hospital and Tracy, the lab tests show that the ovary need not have been removed and Jed's display of arrogance makes it clear that he has a 'God complex.' The hospital agrees to pay, and Jed is dismissed. Tracy then disappears.

Late one night at the college, Andy investigates the basement where he finds a photo and a lock of blonde hair amongst the janitor's things. The janitor explains that the photo is of his family, but he then attacks Andy, who eventually knocks him unconcious. At the hospital lab, where a sperm sample has cleared him of blame for the attacks, Andy learns that he is infertile and could not be responsible for Tracy's pregnancy. He storms into her lawyer's office and demands to know where she is. Her lawyer gives him enough of a hint to be able to find her mother, who in turn reveals that Tracy has been a scheming con artist since childhood. Andy then tracks down her Boston doctor's country address to a clifftop house where he discovers that the doctor was Jed all along, and that he had been injecting Tracy with a toxic substance.

Realising he was set up even before his marriage, Andy leaves a syringe in the couple's bed as a message. He then demands to meet Tracy and counters her threats by telling her that the little boy next door to the Safians' house witnessed the injections. Jed wants to give Andy a one-third cut of the insurance money but Tracy overrules him by shooting him. She creeps into the little boy's room, planning to dispose of this possible witness, but she discovers a dummy at the keyboard and the police at hand. Andy tells her that the little boy has been blind all his life.

Of the string of sexual jealousy thrillers that have followed in the long wake of *Fatal Attraction*, this latest shows an already overheated genre hybrid – the 'Infiltration Thriller' – becoming warped beyond recognition. *Fatal Attraction* turned the generic femme fatale into a less ambivalent figure, no longer duplicitous and unknowable but unequivocally mentally unstable. This demonisation worked because it tapped into powerful anxieties about the change in social roles for both sexes in the 80s,



The new nastier noir: Nicole Kidman

as well as the fear of AIDS.

Subsequent films such as *Final Analysis*, *Single White Female* and *Basic Instinct* have likewise invoked cod-Freudian motivations for similar sociopathic characters. In the most frequently cannibalised model, Hitchcock's films, the sexual power struggles that these characters engage in would be barely contained within a realist tradition. In the infiltration thriller, however, such struggles have become so overtly signalled as to appear ridiculous, with each film looking as if it might at any moment begin to spoof itself.

The deadly woman here, Tracy, is a 'ballbreaker' who has her ovaries ripped out for commercial gain. How much louder can her denial of her 'femininity' be? No longer is it enough that she will marry the hero and then deliberately abort their baby. As for Dr Jed Hill, does he also need a promiscuous sexual reputation to match his apparent 'God complex' before he's mighty (or superficial) enough to fall? In the hyper-melodramatic world of the new nastier *noir*, the answer is emphatically yes. Hill is the necessary puffed-up counterpart to Andy Safian who personifies the 'safe' New Man as victim, the less-than-sympathetic turning worm who has replaced the Chanderesque tough but worldweary knight errant as hero in these films.

Such overblown mythic attributes are now all part of the format fun and have become more outlandish with each new example, so that director Harold Becker's previous foray into the territory, *Sea of Love*, which looked fairly lurid and implausible in 1989, now seems a model of restraint. In the recent infiltration thrillers *everyone* is a version of the hateful yuppie template, and therefore richly deserving of a dire fate. This break away from character realism grants the audience refuge from the duty of identification, giving them the freedom to enjoy the sheer nastiness now rupturing forth.

One of the consequences of encouraging such an emotional and critical distance, however, is that the film becomes almost totally reliant on narrative surprise; hence the scorpion's tail of false endings that are also a given in these films. Here the first narrative closure happens halfway through the film with the exposing of the janitor as the serial student killer. This act of heroism seems out of character for the otherwise passive Andy, but it acts as a springboard for an exposition that bears only slight relation to what's gone before. The eventual revelation that even the Safians' marriage was just a pretext to a scam not only demonises Tracy, but questions the whole basis of Andy's status. His social respectability thus removed, he can join the vicious game and show that only by becoming monstrous himself can he restore some sense of order. The pleasures of such a cartoon enactment of desire and its consequences are considerable. What it implies about the current state of play between the sexes, however, hardly bears thinking about.

Nick James

Manhattan Murder Mystery

USA 1993

Director: Woody Allen

Certificate

PG
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
TriStar Pictures
Executive Producers

Jack Rollins
Charles H. Joffe

Producer
Robert Greenhut

Co-producers
Helen Robin
Joseph Hartwick
Associate Producer
Thomas Reilly

Production Co-ordinator
Helen Robin

Production Manager
Joseph Hartwick

Location Manager
Dana Robin

Casting
Juliet Taylor

Associate:
Laura Rosenthal

Assistant Directors
Thomas Reilly
Richard Patrick

Screenplay
Woody Allen
Marshall Brickman

Director of Photography
Carlo Di Palma

Colour
DuArt

prints by Technicolor
Camera Operator
Dick Mingalone

Digital Effects
Industrial Light & Magic

Editor
Susan E. Morse

Production Designer
Santo Loquasto

Art Director
Speed Hopkins

Art Department
Co-ordinator
Glenn Lloyd

Set Decorator
Susan Bode

Set Dresser
Dave Weinman

Scenic Artists
Master:

James Sorice
Standby:

Cosmo Sorice
Music Extracts

"Der Fliegende
Holländer" by Richard

Wagner, performed
by Chor und Orchestra

der Staatsoper
München, Hans Hotter;

"The Hallway" by Miklos
Rozsa

Songs
"I Happen To Like New
York" by Cole Porter,

performed by Bobby
Short; "The Best Things

In Life Are Free" by
B.G. DeSylva, Lew

Brown, Ray Henderson,
"I'm In The Mood For

Love" by Jimmy
McHugh, Dorothy

Fields, performed by
Erroll Garner; "Take

Five" by Paul Desmond,
performed by the Dave

Brubeck Quartet;
"The Big Noise From

Winnetka" by Ray
Bauden, Bob Haggart,

performed by Bob
Crosby, His Orchestra

and The Bobcats;
"Out of Nowhere" by

John Green, Edward
Heyman, performed by

Coleman Hawkins and
His All-Star Jam Band;

"Have You Met Miss
Jones" by Lorenz Hart,

Richard Rodgers,
performed by Art

Tatum-Ben Webster

Quartet; "Overture from
Guys and Dolls" by Frank

Loesser, performed by
the New Broadway Cast;

"Sing, Sing, Sing (With
A Swing)" by Louis

Prima, performed by
Benny Goodman & His

Orchestra; "Misty" by
and performed by Erroll

Garner
Costume Design

Jeffrey Kurland
Wardrobe Supervisors

Michael Adkins
Bill Christians

Patricia Eiben
Make-up Artist

Fern Buchner
Hair Stylist

Romaine Greene
Titles

The Effects House
Corporation

Sound Editor
Bob Hein

Sound Recordists
James Sabat

Frank Graziadei
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist
Lee Dichter

Al Cerullo
Helicopter Pilot

Film Extracts
Double Indemnity (1944)

Cast

Alan Alda
Ted

Woody Allen
Larry Lipton

Anjelica Huston
Marcia Fox

Diane Keaton
Carol Lipton

Jerry Adler
Paul House

Joy Behar
Marilyn

Ron Rifkin
Sy

Lynn Cohen
Lillian House

William Addy
Jack, the Super

John Doumanian
Sylvia Kauders

Neighbours
Ira Wheeler

EMS Doctor
Melanie Norris

Helen Moss
Marge Redmond

Mrs Dalton
Zach Braff

Nick Lipton
George Manos

Linda Taylor
"21 Club" Staff

Aida Turturro
Hotel Day Clerk

John A. Costelloe
Frank Pellegrino

Philip Levy
Wendell Pierce

Steven Randazzo
Policemen

Yanni Sfinias
Hotel Night Clerk

Gloria Irizarry
Hotel Maid

Ruth Last
Lillian's Sister

Suzanne Raffaelli
Theatre Auditioner

9,666 feet
107 minutes

Returning to their apartment one evening, Larry and Carol Lipton meet their neighbours, an older couple named Paul and Lillian House, and are invited in for coffee. Coming home the next day, Carol is horrified to find that Mrs House – who had boasted of her good health – has died of a heart attack. Soon afterwards, Larry and Carol encounter Paul, who seems oddly cheerful. Carol begins to suspect foul play, but Larry is dismissive. She gets far more response from their friend Ted, a lonely divorcee who has always fancied her.

Carol steals a key to Paul's apartment and snoops for clues. Hiding when he returns unexpectedly, she hears him planning a trip to Paris with a woman called Helen. This proves to be a young actress, Helen Moss; with Ted's help, Carol tracks her down, trailing her to a disused cinema Paul owns. Larry is still scornful, but begins to grow jealous of Ted. To distract him, he fixes him a date with one of Larry's own clients, the glamorous crime writer Marcia Fox.

Carol catches a glimpse, on a passing bus, of the supposedly dead Lillian House, and traces her to the Hotel Waldron. With Ted preoccupied with Marcia, she drags a reluctant Larry to the hotel, where they find Lillian's body. By the time the police arrive the corpse has vanished, but Larry and Carol see Paul drive off with it to a foundry, where he tips it into a vat of molten metal.

Marcia devises an elaborate bluff. Helen is invited to a fake audition and given lines which, taped and re-cut, can be used as a phone call to Paul telling him Larry and Carol are holding his wife's body for blackmail. In response, Paul kidnaps Carol and phones Larry to bring the body to his cinema. Once there, Larry rescues Carol while Paul is shot by his jealous assistant and ex-lover, Mrs Dalton. Marcia explains the mystery to Ted: the original body was that of Lillian's rich sister, whose money the couple plotted to steal, but Paul was two-timing Lillian with the younger Helen.

As Brian de Palma learnt some time back, if you're going to strew your films with references to other people's movies, you'd better make sure your own material can stand the comparison. *Manhattan Murder Mystery* is littered with buffish in-jokes – we kick off with a clip from *Double Indemnity*, the supposedly dead wife shows up on a bus labelled "Vertigo", the final confrontation plays out a re-run of the mirror shoot-out from *The Lady from Shanghai*, and so on. But the main effect of all these jokey homages is to remind us how much better this kind of thing was done by Wilder, Hitchcock and Welles.

By Allen too, in some ways. The credit sequence, with Cole Porter's "I Happen to Like New York" sung over a soaring 'copter shot of the nocturnal city, immediately recalls the "Rhapsody in Blue" opening of *Manhattan*, but in visual terms *Manhattan Murder*



The way we were: Allen, Keaton

Mystery never matches the earlier film's burnished black-and-white 'scope photography. Keaton and Allen acted far better together in *Annie Hall*: here their talking-across-each-other scenes, with her high-pitched ditsiness set against his hyperventilating mega-kvetch, become increasingly irritating. And while in *Play It Again, Sam* the last-reel *Casablanca* renunciation speech carried a real emotional charge, in the present film's climax Allen is so busy devising his clever Wellesian pastiche that all tension drains out of the scene.

For the work of such a notoriously perfectionist director, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* comes across as a surprisingly sloppy and slung-together affair. In one over-extended piece of business, Allen breaks an ornament while searching Paul's flat; not only isn't it very funny, it never pays off later in the plot. Larry and Carol's son Nick suddenly shows up for two minutes, does nothing much, and is never heard from again. Worst of all, the film never establishes a consistent comic tone. Several key scenes, such as the faked phone call, are blighted by fussy over-acting, with Allen himself the worst offender.

All in all, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* has an oddly tentative feel to it, as though Allen (maybe knocked askew by recent personal events) were casting about, uncertain where he or his career was heading. Previously – in, say, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* – the dithery, insecure comic persona seemed separate from the self-assured filmmaker, but now the two seem to be disconcertingly merging. Even the one-liners have a provisional air, with the stand-up comedian on auto-pilot. The film's one clear asset is a characteristically poised, witty appearance from Anjelica Huston, who has developed into the kind of actress – like Jean Arthur or Myrna Loy – who can be looked to for a stylish performance no matter what's going on around her. Once again, she doesn't disappoint.

Philip Kemp

The Meteor Man

USA 1993

Director: Robert Townsend

Certificate

PG
Distributor
Electric Triangle
Production Company
Metro Goldwyn Mayer

A Tinsel Townsend
production

Producer
Loretha C. Jones

Production Co-ordinator
Paddy Cullen

Unit Production Manager
Patricia Whitcher

Location Manager
Gerrit V. Folsom

Co-Location Manager
Earl West

Post-production
Co-ordinators
Jill Brooks

Vicki L. Engel
Lisa Vaughn

Susan Colletta-
Busalacchi

Casting
Eileen Mack Knight

Consultant:
Chemin Sylvia Bernard

Co-consultant:
Gabrielle Franchot

ADR Voice:
Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors
Richard A. Wells

Joseph Ray
Rodney Hooks

William Jennings
Screenplay

Robert Townsend
Director of Photography

John A. Alonzo
Colour

DeLuxe
Optical Photography

Supervisors
John Ellis

Bruce Vecchitto
Effects Camera Supervisor

Charlie Clavadtischer
Camera Operators

Pernell Tyus
Richard Turner

Key Effects:
Martin Rosenberg

Motion Control:
Peter Daulton

Optical:
Jon Alexander

Donald Clark
Jeff Doran

Bob Fernley
Keith Johnson

James Lim
Kenneth Smith

Effects:
Patrick T. Myers

Jim Hagedorn
Colin Campbell

Special Visual Effects
Industrial Light & Magic

General Manager:
Jim Morris

Executive in Charge
of Production:

Patricia Blau
Visual Effects

Supervisor:
Bruce Nicholson

Art Director:
Claudia Mullaly

Editor:
Michael McGovern

Visual Effects/Plate
Co-ordinator:

Camille Cellucci
Wire Removal Specialist

Sandra Ford Karpman
Opticals

Pacific Title
Optical Line-up

Peg Hunter
Jennifer Lee

Thomas Rosseter
Kristen Trattner

John Whisnant
Debra Wolff

Optical Processing
Mike Ellis

Tim Geideman
Computer Graphics

Supervisor
Alex Seiden

Computer Graphics

Animators
Thomas L. Hutchinson

Joe Letteri
Joseph Pasquale

Doug Smythe
Computer Graphics

Production Manager
Gail Currey

Digital Effects Artists
Barbara Brennan

Dave Carson
Rachel Falk

Wade Howie
Jeffrey B. Light

Greg Maloney
Thomas J. Smith

Robert Weaver
Digital Roto Artist

Sandy Houston
Animation Supervisor

Wes Ford Takahashi
Effects Animators

Tim Berglund
Anthony F. Stacchi

Stop Motion Animator
Harry Walton

Rotoscope Supervisor
Jack Mongovan

Rotoscope Artists
Terry Molatore

Joanne Hafner
Ellen Mueller

Leslie Arvio
Debra Bainum

Penny Yrigoyen
Lisa Drostova

Margot Hale
Film Scanning Supervisor

Joshua Pines
Editor

Adam Bernardi
Production Designer

Toby Corbett
Art Director

Greg Papalia
Set Design

William J. Newman II
Stephanie J. Gordon

Set Decorator
Kathryn Peters

Storyboard Artist
Ed Eyth

Special Effects Foreman
Joe D. Ramsey

Special Effects Gang Boss
James D. Camomile

Special Effects
David Heron

Robert Finley Jnr
Electronic Special Effects

Foreman:
Scott M. Thompson

Specialist:
Larry M. Shorts

Model Shop Project
Supervisor

Larry Tan
Model Makers

Jean Bolte
Kim Smith

Chris Goehle
Erik Jensen

Mark Anderson
Chris Reed

Richard Miller
Music

Cliff Eidelman
Music Supervisor

Sharon Heyward
Songs

"Can't Let Her Get Away"
by Michael Jackson,

Teddy Riley, performed
by Michael Jackson;

"Somebody Cares For
You" by Frank McComb,

Gerald LaVert, Terry
Stubbs, Edward Banks,

Melvin Sephus,
performed by Frank

McComb; "Them There
Eyes" by Maceo Pinkard,

William Tracey, Doris
Tauber, performed by

Billie Holiday; "U Turn
Me On" by Roy Pennon,

Suamana Brown,
Stephanie Riley,

performed by Hi-Five;
"Good Love" by Pete

Scott, Al Richardson, performed by Elaine Stepter; "It's On" by Anthony Criss, Vincent Brown, Keir Gist, Donald Byrd, performed by Naughty by Nature; "Is It Just Too Much" by Phil Roy, Roy Hay, performed by Keith Washington; "Don't Waste My Time" by Raymond Jones, Sami McKinney, Denise Rich, performed by Lisa Taylor; "Gotta Know (Your Name)" by Steve Hurley, Chantay Savage, Tommye Miller, Jamie Principle, "Something New" by Rodney K. Jackson, Danny Moore, performed by Malaika; "Move This" by Manuella Kamosi, Jo Bogaert, performed by Technotronic; "Too Legit To Quit" by Hammer, Felton C. Pilate II, Michael Kelly, Louis K. Burrell, James Earley, performed by Hammer; "I Say a Prayer" by Pete Scott, Al Richardson, performed by Big Hat Ray Ray; "It's For You" by Shanice Wilson, Eric Kirkland, Michael Angelo Saulsberry, performed by Shanice

Costume Design
Ruth Carter

Costume Supervisor
Maritza L. Garcia

Make-up
Design:
Laini Thompson

Key:
Edna Mae Sheen

Hair
Design:
Ronald W. Smith

Key:
Frank Fontaine

TitleDesign
Robert Dawson

Sound Design
Gary Rydstrom

Supervising Sound Editors
Richard Hymns
Tim Holland

Sound Editors
Sara Bolder
Michael Silvers

ADR Editors
Marilyn McCoppen
Hugh Waddell

Foley Editor
Sandina Bailo-Lape

Sound Recordists
Mark Weingarten

Music:
Robin Eidelman
Jacqueline Tager
Virginia Ellsworth
David Slusser

Foley Recordist
Tom Myers
Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Tom Johnson
Dennis Leonard
Gary Rydstrom

Sound Effects Editors
Ken Fischer
Frank Eulner

Foley Artists
Dennie Thorpe
Marnie Moore

Fencing Consultants
Bernard Steward
Anthony Wormack

Stunt Co-ordinator
Jeff Ward

Cast
Robert Townsend
Jefferson Reed
Marla Gibbs
Mrs Reed
Eddie Griffin
Michael
Robert Guillaume
Mr Reed

James Earl Jones
Mr Moses
RoyFegan
Simon
Cynthia Belgrave
Mrs Harris
MarilynColeman
Mrs Walker
Don Cheadle
Goldilocks
BobbyMcGee
Uzi
Bill Cosby
Marvin
BigDaddy Kane
Pirate
Frank Gorshin
Byers
Sinbad
Malik
Nancy Wilson
Mrs Laws
Luther Vandross
Jamison
Another Bad Creation:
Romelle "Ro Ro" Chapman
Demetrius "Red" Pugh
Marliss "Mark" Pugh
Christopher Sellers
David "Lit" Dave" Shelton
Adrian "G.A." Witcher
Jr. Lords
Tiny Lister
Digit
Jenifer Lewis
Mrs Williams
Stephanie Williams
Stacy
Naughty By Nature:
Vinnie
Treach
Kaygee
Bloods
Cypress Hill:
Louis Fresse
Larry Muggerrud
Senen Reyes
Crips
BizMarkie
Don Reed
Drug Workers
Beverly Johnson
Greg Littman
Doctors
LaWanda Page
Old Nurse
Lela Rochon
Vanessa
Wallace Shawn
Mr Little
John Witherspoon
Clarence James
Carter III
Charlayne Woodard
Janice Farrell
Tommy R. Hicks
Officer Patterson
Asia Dosreis
Squirrel
Sam Jackson
Dre
Barbara Montgomery
Dre's Mother
Turean Butler
Reginald Davis
Raynard Holman
Darren Overton
Bryan Young
Jason Young
Baby Lords
George Allen III
Man
Janice Garcia
Screaming Woman
Deborah Lacey
TV Housewife
FaizonLove
Husband
Stu Gilliam
Head Physician
Angela Robinson
Nurse
Joel Weiss
Orderly
Larry A. Wiggs II
Karate Kid
Shirley Jenkins
Bystander
Clayton Lebouef
Junkie
Dierk Torsek
TV Newscaster

8,984 feet
100 minutes

Mild-mannered teacher Jefferson Reed lives in a Washington DC neighbourhood terrorised by the Golden Lords gang. Struck one night by an emerald green meteor, Reed discovers he has super powers. Transformed into superhero Meteor Man, he begins to clean up the neighbourhood with such success that crime boss Byers gets the Lords to intervene. After several confrontations, Reed's powers start to wane. The local community action group suffers reprisals and want Reed to leave. After the Lords shoot his mother, Reed fights gang boss Simon and is re-energised when Marvin, a local tramp who possesses a meteor fragment, appears. Simon also gains super powers by touching the meteor but Reed defeats him. In his weakened state, however, he is unable to take on the newly arrived Byers and his henchmen. Two rival gangs, the Bloods and the Crips, to whom Meteor Man had previously brought peace, intervene. The police arrest Byers and the Lords.

There is not much to *The Meteor Man* beyond black actors and musicians combining to rewrite *Superman* for an inner-city experience. In his films *Hollywood Shuffle* and *The Five Heartbeats*, which parodied black aspirations in Hollywood and the record industry respectively, writer/director/actor Robert Townsend gained a reputation as a comic who remained true to a black American base. This is fair enough. As America's black film output diversifies, Townsend represents an entertainment strand which, if not quite of Eddie Murphy status, is, at least, black-originated and controlled.

The desire to showcase black talent accounts for a whirlwind of names passing through – often so quickly that their presence is sadly negligible. Bill Cosby is limited to a few grunts, while James Earl Jones, normally an actor of presence and power, makes do with a wig-obsessed collector of vintage blues and jazz records. Luther Vandross takes a non-speaking role as a gangster, while rappers Another Bad Creation, Naughty By Nature and Cypress Hill all appear as gangs. Sitcom stars Robert Guillaume and Marla Gibbs are good for a few cackles but Townsend's lame script does few of them any favours.

Morality tales of the superhero sort require such directness to get their message across. In this case the message is one of collective responsibility for the safety of one's community. The Golden Lords may not be baddies in the same vicious league as those found in *Boyz N the Hood* or *New Jack City*, but they do represent the endemic problem of black-on-black crime. Recent black cinema has been viewed through a political lens by a media made uneasy about depictions of remorseless violence. *The Meteor Man* is no masterpiece but, in a climate where box-office success bears a correlation to the on-screen body count, Townsend is to be commended for attempting to redress the balance.

Louise Gray

Mrs. Doubtfire

USA 1993

Director: Chris Columbus

Certificate
12

Distributor
20th Century Fox

Production Company
A Blue Wolf
production for
20th Century Fox

Executive Producer
Matthew Rushton

Producers
Marsha Garces Williams
Robin Williams
Mark Radcliffe

Co-producer
Joan Bradshaw

Associate Producer
Paula DuPre'

Production Co-ordinator
Jacqueline A. Shea

Unit Production Manager
Joan Bradshaw

Location Manager
Bruce Devan

Casting
Janet Hirschenson
Jane Jenkins
Associate:
Michael Hirschenson

Assistant Directors
Geoff Hansen
Cherylanne Martin
Stephen Lee Davis
Carol Bawer

Screenplay
Randi Mayem Singer
Leslie Dixon
Based on the story
Alias Madame Doubtfire
by Anne Fine

Director of Photography
Donald McAlpine
Panavision

Colour
DeLuxe

Animation Camera
Ted Bemiller & Sons

Camera Operators
Douglas Ryan
Kim Marks

Animation
Chuck Jones

Animation Producer
Linda Jones Clough

Associate:
Stephen A. Fossati

Animators
Bill Littlejohn
Barry Nelson
Tom Ray
Tom Roth
Dwayne Gressky
Ralph Newmann
Claude Raynes

Animation Backgrounds
Rick Reinert

Checkers
Debra Rykoff
Charlotte Clark

Editor
Raja Gosnell

Production Designer
Angelo Graham

Art Director
W. Steven Graham

Art Department

Co-ordinator
Kristen Ross

Set Design
Steve Sakland
Steve Wolff
Robert Goldstein
Harold Fuhrman

Set Decorator
Garrett Lewis

Scenic Artist
Todd McCune Bray

Special Effects
John McLeod
Crew:
Frank W. Tarantino
Leo Loverro
Geoff Heron

Music
Howard Shore

Cartoon Music/Music Director
Fred Steiner

Orchestrations
Howard Shore

Supervising Music Editor
Ellen Segal

Music Editor
Robin Katz

Songs
"Babalu" by Margarita Lecuona; "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)" by Steve Tyler, Joe Perry, Desmond Childs, performed by Aerosmith; "Walk Like a Man" by Bob Crewe, Bob Gaudio, performed by The Four Seasons; "Luck Be a Lady" by Frank Loesser, performed by Frank Sinatra; "Jump Around" by Erik Schrody, Larry Muggerrud, performed by House of Pain; "Dragon" by Dominic Frontiere; "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" by and performed by James Brown; "Stormy Monday Blues" by Aaron Walker, performed by B.B. King, Albert Collins

Costume Design
MaritAllen

Costume Supervisors
Deirdre Nicola Williams
Christine Peters
Robin Williams:
Jim Cullen

Robin Williams' Bodysuits
Linda Benavente
Notaro

Key Make-up Artist
Ve Neill

Make-up Artist
Pamela Westmore

Special Make-up Creation
Greg Cannom
Crew:
Mitch Devane
John Logan
Steve Prouty
Todd Tucker
Roland Blancaflor
Keith Vanderlaan

Key Hairstylist
Yolanda Toussieng

Title Design
Nina Saxon

Titles
Pacific Title

Sound Design
Gary Rydstrom

Supervising Sound Editor
Gloria S. Borders

Sound Editors
Ewa Sztompke
Sara Bolder
Claire Sanfilippo

ADR Editor
C.J. Appel

Foley Editors
Sandina Bailo-Lape
Marian Wilde

Sound Recordists
Nelson Stoll
Music:
Dan Wallin
Dolby stereo

Foley Recordist
Chris Boyes

Sound Re-recordists
Gary Rydstrom
Tom Johnson
Gary Summers

Sound Effects Editor
Bob Shoup

Foley Artists
Dennie Thorpe
Tom Barwick

Stunt Co-ordinator
Troy Brown

Stunts
Patrick Banta
Leon Delaney
David Lyle Draves

Cast
Robin Williams
Daniel Hillard/Mrs. Doubtfire
SallyField
Miranda Hillard
Pierce Brosnan
Stu
Harvey Fierstein
Frank
PollyHolliday
Gloria
Lisa Jakub
Lydia Hillard
Matthew Lawrence
Chris Hillard
Mara Wilson
Natalie Hillard
Robert Prosky
Mr Lundy
Anne Haney
Mrs Sellner
Scott Capurro
Jack
Sydney Walker
Bus Driver
Joe Bellan
TV Boss
Martin Mull
Justin Gregory
Terence McGovern
ADR Director Lou
Karen Kahn
Eva Gholson
James Cunningham
Employees
Ralph Peduto
Cop
Scott Beach
Judge
Juliette Marshall
Miranda's Attorney
Drew Letchworth
Daniel's Attorney

Jessica Myerson
Miranda's Mother
Sharon Lockwood
Alice
Jim Cullen
Thug
Kenneth Loo
Jeff Loo
Staring Boys
Betsy Monroe
Stunning Woman
Joseph Narducci
Delivery Boy
James S. Cranna
Ron
Todd Williams
Dr Toad
AdeleProom
Lundy's Secretary
Rick Overton
Maitre'd
Dan Spencer
Cook
Paul Guilfoyle
Head Chef
MollyMcClure
Housekeeper
Andrew L. Prosky
TV Director
William Newman
Mr Sprinkles
Chris Pray
Puppeteer
Geoff Bolt
Lundy's Waiter
Dick Bright
Stu's Waiter
Adam Bryant
Man in Men's Room
Tavia Cathcart
Tanya the Hostess
C. Beau Fitzsimons
Jeff Moeller
Valets
Benne Alder
Woman in Restroom

San Francisco. Following a disagreement with a colleague, voice-over artist Daniel Hillard walks out of his job dubbing cartoon animals. He returns home to his children – Lydia, Chris and Natalie – and puts on an impromptu birthday party for Chris. Alerted by a neighbour, his wife Miranda rushes home from her design company to find Daniel and the kids creating mayhem. The incident forces her to realise that she wants a divorce. Daniel seeks solace with his brother Frank and his boyfriend Jack, both theatre make-up artists. Later the divorce comes through and Miranda is awarded custody of the children, with Daniel only allowed to see them on Saturdays. The court decision, however, is to be renewed in six months. Daniel visits the court liaison officer who tells him he must get a job and a decent home for the children to visit. He secures a post, working as a shipping clerk at a TV studio.

Meanwhile, Miranda discovers that a new client is her old college flame Stu. Later, collecting the children from Daniel, she informs him that she is advertising for a housekeeper. Daniel alters the newspaper ad form to ensure that no-one contacts her. He phones Miranda and, putting on a variety of voices, pretends to be prospective housekeepers. Miranda takes the bait and schedules an appointment for him to visit in the persona of Mrs Doubtfire. Made up by Frank as the matronly Mrs Doubtfire, Daniel visits Miranda and the children, and gets the job. After a few mishaps, Daniel takes control of



Tootsie role: Robin Williams

the household, balancing it with his TV job. One day he arrives at Miranda's to find that she has brought Stu home to meet the children. Unhappy about this, Daniel attempts to sabotage Stu's chances.

Later, Chris walks in on Mrs Doubtfire in the bathroom and realizes that she is a man in drag. Daniel comes clean with Chris and his eldest daughter, Lydia, but continues the charade. At the TV station, Daniel interests Mr Lundy, the studio head, with his ideas for a children's programme. Lundy arranges a dinner meeting with him, but when Stu invites the whole family (and Mrs Doubtfire) out for dinner to celebrate Miranda's birthday, Daniel discovers that the table is booked for the same time and place as the appointment – and he can't break either engagement. Throughout the evening, Daniel does a double act, but things go awry as he starts drinking with Lundy, and eventually his cover is blown. At the second hearing of the custody case, Daniel is penalized for his behaviour and forbidden to see the children. Meanwhile, Miranda misses Mrs Doubtfire's household management skills. Lundy gives Daniel, as Mrs Doubtfire, a children's show. Miranda watches the programme and decides to visit him. She realizes that the kids need him and revokes the court's decision. The couple remain amicably divorced but Daniel gets to see his children every day.

● Mrs. *Doubtfire* could be described as a crazy *Kramer v. Kramer* for the 90s – but via *Tootsie*. Adapted by Leslie Dixon and Randi Mayem Singer from the novel by celebrated children's writer Anne Fine, it is a potent, pantomimic and hugely hilarious family fantasy that shows every evidence of gripping audiences as much as Chris Columbus' *Home Alone*. If that film showed the cracks in the household, with its young hero Kevin successfully wishing parents and siblings away ("families suck"), *Mrs. Doubtfire* takes those cracks to be a given. Unable to suffer her husband's reckless behaviour any longer, Miranda (Sally Field, actually likeable here with her qualms about her spouse sympathetically handled) wishes him away via a decree nisi. Daniel's quest is to return to the bosom of that family via the magic of Uncle Frank and Auntie Jack's ultimate make-

over of latex and body-suit, and his own inimitable skill for "doing voices".

Robin Williams' last incarnation as a family man was in *Hook*, in which he plays a harried executive with scant time for his kids or wife. In *Hook*, Peter Pan has become a "corporate clown" (as Daniel describes the workaholic Miranda's colleagues) who has to be whisked off to Neverland to retrieve the playful side of himself that will bring him back home. In *Mrs. Doubtfire* (which Williams also co-produced with his wife Marsha Garces Williams), he starts out as too much of the roaring lost boy. The film opens with Williams in the sound booth, manically dubbing a Chuck Jones cartoon. Here Columbus not only signals a major influence (for what is *Home Alone* if not a live action cartoon), but also underlines the cartoon nature of Williams' persona (backed up by his recent contributions to *Toys* and *Aladdin*). This sequence segues into a party scene that is a gorgeous riot of mismanagement as the kids and Daniel bop on the sofas, ponies trot – and worse – in the hall and rabbits chew up the plants on the neighbour's rockery (cf. the equally lavish but controlled extravaganza organized by Steve Martin in *Parenthood*). This is every child's fantasy: Ma's out, Pa's out, let's party (except that here, Pa's in). Once ejected from the home, Daniel's key to returning is what every party animal should know: a lesson in house-training that embraces everything from how to talk to a woman (Daniel and Miranda, never really talked) to cooking with Julia Childs.

As the matronly Mrs Doubtfire, Williams plays the swell dame who is allowed her kitchen antics and her salty spiel (talking to Stu of Miranda: "You should see the power tools in her bedroom"). But Williams keeps her for the most part in the realm of the almost possible rather than doing her as coarse, exaggerated drag. Speaking in a sweet, lilting British accent that hovers somewhere between Land's End and John O'Groats, she incarnates homely, traditional values – the nanny of a bygone era who might have well paraded her former charges in Peter Pan's Kensington Gardens. This effect allows for the comedy of clashes (genteel widow doing the cleaning to 'Papa's Got a Brand New Bag', leering at a bikini babe at a country club, and spouting forth a string of brilliant one-liners in her attempt to wrinkle Stu's Pringle-sweater composure), as well as suggesting an old world order. But the fact that Mrs Doubtfire replaces a dinosaur programme at Lundy's station suggests an evolution rather than regression of Major's 'back-to-basics' variety. The film ends with the striking image of Williams masquerading as a matriarch, eulogising the possibilities for "all sorts of different families" on her kids' show, as Daniel drives off with the kids, he and Miranda happily divorced ever after. It promises a brave new world while begging the question: why can't a man be more like a woman?

Lizzie Francke

A Perfect World

USA 1993

Director: Clint Eastwood

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

A Malpaso production

Producers

Mark Johnson

David Valdes

Production Co-ordinator

Cynthia Streit

Production Manager

David Valdes

Location Manager

Kate McCarley

Casting

Phyllis Huffman

Texas:

Liz Keigley

Assistant Directors

L. Dean Jones

Bill Bannerman

Sarah Shields

Screenplay

John Lee Hancock

Director of Photography

Jack N. Green

Panavision

Colour

Technicolor

Camera Operators

Stephen St. John

Don Reddy

Editors

Joel Cox

Ron Spang

Production Designer

Henry Bumstead

Art Director

Jack Taylor Jnr

Set Design

Charlie Vassar

Antoinette Gordon

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

John Frazier

Special Effects

David Amborn

J.W. McCormick

Music

Lennie Niehaus

E.V.I. Solos Performed by

Judd Miller

Music Editor

Donald Harris

Songs

"Ida Red" performed by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys; "Abilene" by John D. Loudermilk, Lester Brown, Bob Gibson, performed by George Hamilton IV; "South" by Bennie Moten, Thamon Hayes, performed by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys; "Please Help Me, I'm Falling (In Love With You)" by Don Robertson, Hal Blair, performed by Hank Locklin; "Blue Blue Day" by and performed by Don Gibson; "Catch a Falling Star" by Paul Vance, Lee Pockriss, performed by Perry Como; "Guess Things Happen That Way" by Jack Clement, performed by Johnny Cash; "Night Life" by Willie Nelson, Walt Breeland, Paul Buskirk, performed by Rusty Draper; "Sea of Heartbreak" by Hal David, Paul Hampton, performed by Don Gibson; "Dark Moon" by Ned Miller, "The Little White Cloud That Cried" by Johnnie Ray, performed by Chris Isaak; "Funny How

Time Slips Away"

by and performed

by Willie Nelson;

"Don't Worry" by

and performed

by Marty Robbins;

"Big Fran's Baby"

by Clint Eastwood

Costume Design

Erica Edell Phillips

Costume Supervisor

Amy Stofsky

Make-up Artists

James McCoy

F.X. Perez

Hairstylists

Carol O'Connell

Elle Elliott

Frida Aradottir

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editor

Alan Robert Murray

Dialogue Supervisor

Karen Spangenberg

Dialogue Editors

Richard Burton

Kim Secrist

James J. Isaacs

Michael Magill

Jayme S. Parker

John Kwiatkowski

Stu Bernstein

Zack Davis

ADR Supervisor

Devon Curry

ADR Editor

Bobbi Banks

Foley Editors

Maxwell Spencer

Jackson

Leslie E. Wolf Jnr

Matthew Harrison

Leonard T. Geschke

David L. Horton Jnr

Sound Recordists

Jeff Wexler

Music:

Bobby Fernandez

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Les Fresholtz

Dick Alexander

Allen L. Stone

Sound Effects Editors

Gary Krivacek

Terry Rodman

Neil Burrow

John Philips

Milton C. Burrow

Samuel C. Crutcher

Tom Stevens

James J. Klinger

Foley Artists

Catherine Rowe

John Roesch

Stunt Co-ordinator

Buddy Van Horn

Stunts

Dan Barringer

Laura Dash

Brian Smrz

Andy Gill

Orwin Harvey

John Robotham

Diamond Farnsworth

Spike Silver

Kevin Costner's Stunt

Double

Norman Howell

Cast

Kevin Costner

Butch Haynes

Clint Eastwood

Red Garnett

Laura Dern

Sally Gerber

T.J. Lowther

Phillip Perry

Keith Szarabajka

Terry Pugh

Leo Burmester

Tom Adler

Paul Hewitt

Dick Suttle

Bradley Whitford

Bobby Lee

Ray McKinnon

Bradley

Jennifer Griffin

Gladys Perry

Leslie Flowers

Naomi Perry

Belinda Flowers

Ruth Perry

Darryl Cox

Mr Hughes

Jay Whiteaker

Superman

Taylor Suzanne McBride

Tinkerbell

Christopher Reagan

Ammons

Dancing Skeleton

Mark Voges

Larry

Vernon Grote

Prison Guard

James Jeter

Oldtimer

Ed Geldart

Fred Cummings

Bruce McGill

Paul Saunders

Nik Hagler

General Store Manager

Gary Moody

Local Sheriff

George Haynes

Farmer

Marietta Marich

Farmer's Wife

Rodger Boyce

Mr Willits

Lucy Lee Flippin

Lucy

Elizabeth Ruscio

Paula

David Kroll

Newscaster

Gabriel Folse

Officer Terrance

Gil Glasgow

Officer Pete

Dennis Letts

Governor

John Hussey

Governor's Aide

Margaret Bowman

Trick 'r Treat Woman

John M. Jackson

Bob Fielder

Connie Cooper

Bob's Wife

Cameron Finley

Bob Fielder Jnr

Katy Wottrich

Patsy Fielder

Marco Perella

Road Block Officer

Linda Hart

Eileen

Brandon Smith

Officer Jones

George Orrison

Officer Orrison

Wayne Dehart

Mack

Mary Alice

Lottie

Kevin Woods

Cleveland

Tony Frank

Arch Andrews

Woody Watson

Lieutenant Hendricks

● Dallas County, Halloween, 1963.

The fatherless, middle-class Perry family is visited by trick-or-treaters. When a chaperoning parent asks Mrs. Perry why her seven-year-old son Phillip isn't trick-or-treating as well, she explains that it's against the family's religion as Jehovah's Witnesses. Meanwhile, convicts Butch Haynes and Terry Pugh escape from a nearby prison, assaulting a guard and stealing his car. The two head into the suburbs to steal another car, by chance coming upon the Perry neighborhood. As Butch searches for a car, Terry enters the Perry house and begins sexually assaulting the mother. Butch intervenes just in time, and the two escape with Phillip as hostage.

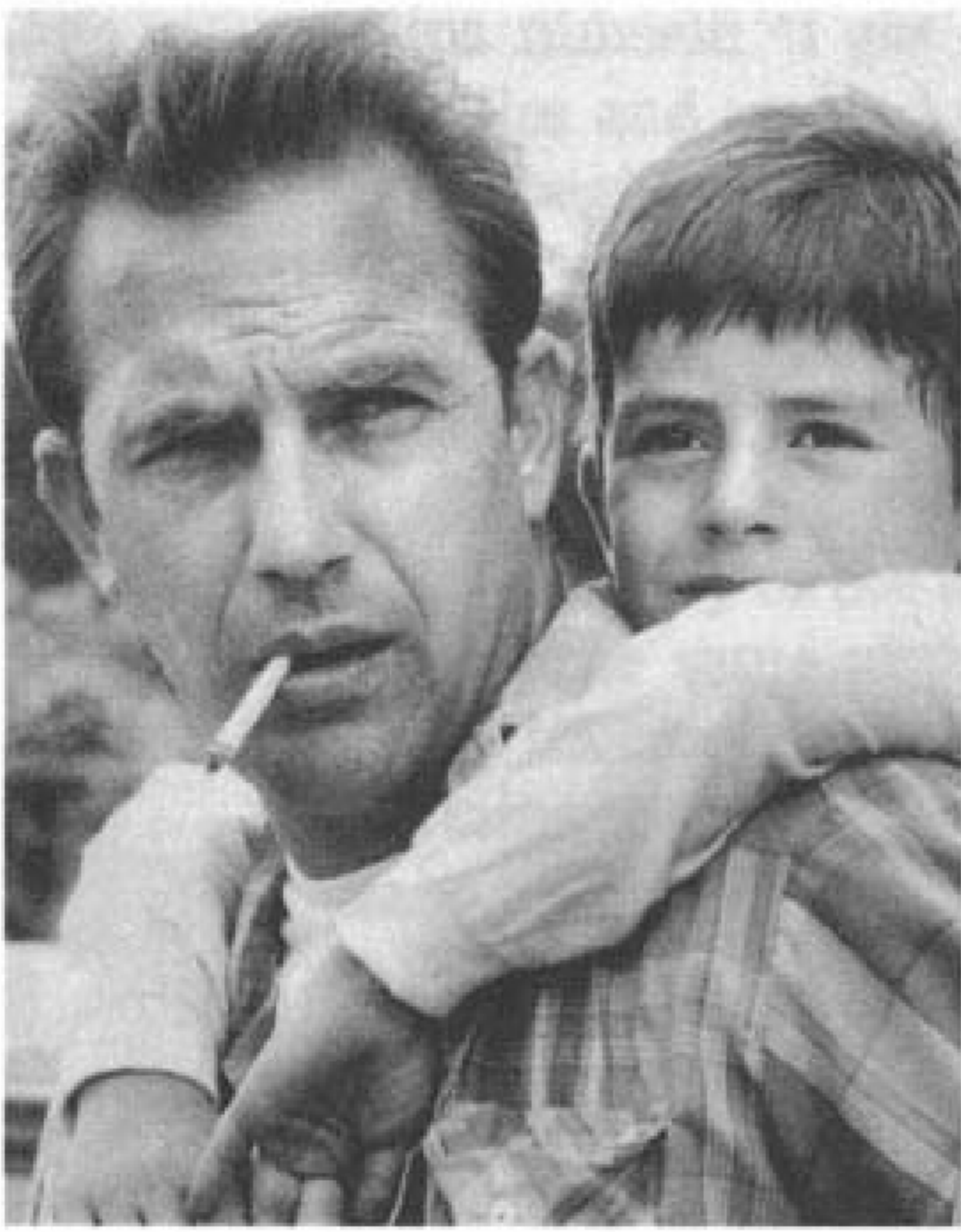
On the road, the tension is thick between the three: when Butch stops at a store and half-jokingly leaves Phillip holding a gun on Terry, Terry ends up molesting the boy as well. Butch confronts Terry in a nearby field and kills him. Meanwhile, law officials headed by Texas Ranger Red Garnett are busy tracking Butch's possible movements and commandeering the Governor's new-fangled luxury trailer as a mobile home base. Garnett's team is joined by a laconic FBI marksman and Sally Gerber, a criminologist who has a tough time earning Garnett's respect. Once on the road alone, Phillip and Butch get along famously, exchanging father-son intimacies, stealing new cars, and charming the clerks at a store where Phillip steals a Halloween costume (Casper the Friendly Ghost) at his own initiative, moments before local cops attempt to trap Butch and fail. Given the option to stay behind, Philip elects to ride on. Garnett's mobile home drives right by Butch, turns abruptly around and ends up landing the trailer in a roadside ditch.

After encounters with a vaca- ►

◀ tioning family, a roadblock and a lusty waitress, during which Butch asks the boy to make a list of all the things his mother won't allow him to do, the pair meet Mack, a black farm-worker, who invites them to his house to sleep. The next morning, after witnessing Mack hit his young son needlessly, Butch suddenly becomes psychotic, forcing Mack at gunpoint to apologise to the boy, then tying him up in preparation for killing the whole family. Horrified, Phillip retrieves the gun and shoots Butch in the stomach. Soon Garnett's team arrives with Mrs Perry and everyone nervously faces off in another empty field, with Butch slowly dying from his wound. In return for Mrs Perry's promise that Phillip can ride a rollercoaster and eat cotton candy, Butch sends the boy up to the line of patrol cars, but Phillip turns back to bring Butch with him, prompting Garnett to disarm himself and approach the pair. As Butch reaches into his back pocket for a postcard he once received from the father who deserted him, the FBI marksman assumes he is reaching for a gun and shoots him dead. As Butch lies in the field, Phillip is flown out by helicopter.

● Few cults of personality have seeped into world movie culture as pervasively as Eastwoodology: the care, feeding and worship of Clint Eastwood's aesthetic reputation as a filmmaker and icon. His stock as a 'serious' director, which few had bought through *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, *The Gauntlet*, *Bronco Billy*, *Heartbreak Ridge* and *Honkytonk Man*, has risen dramatically since the more ambitious *Bird*, *White Hunter*, *Black Heart* and *Unforgiven*. Let's not forget, either, the creeping 70s nostalgia that has put a grimy glow on *Play Misty For Me* and *High Plains Drifter*. At one time Eastwood occupied the action-hero gutter of Charles Bronson and Chuck Norris, his directorial efforts perceived as indulgences paid for by box office clout: today, he's the nearest thing Hollywood has to a Hawksian auteur. It's the most remarkable arc in critical regard since Edgar G. Ulmer.

Today, Eastwood can do no wrong for most cinephiles, for whom *Unforgiven* was a sanctification of itinerant *Dirty Harry* fandom. True, 1992's Oscar winner was something of a miracle, as if Gary Cooper and Nicholas Ray had somehow fused into a single movie-making savant and reinvented a classic genre, with the Chekovian wisdom and pathos it always promised. But still, the no-assembly-required four-star accolades *A Perfect World* has been gathering in the US are almost surreally inappropriate to the mediocre road movie redux he's unceremoniously chosen as *Unforgiven*'s follow-up. Eastwood himself must be surprised: nowhere in *A Perfect World* does the film proclaim itself to be anything but a formulaic Hollywood project, the sort Eastwood is probably seeking more often now to segue himself into, in supporting character roles. With American critics blathering on about the



Baby on board: Costner, Lowther

significance of the final scene's father/son/holy Friendly Ghost symbolism, it's enough to make Eastwood reconsider running again for Mayor of Carmel, California.

The script for *A Perfect World* is professionally engineered for retro coolness, revisiting the road movie milieu of *In Cold Blood*, positioning itself in Dallas County days before JFK's drive through Dealey Plaza, and taking an ingenuous kid along for the ride. Unfortunately, the pleasant, slack texture of the movie – peppered with plenty of wry witticisms à la Costner – leaves a great deal of unexplored territory surrounding the film's various themes: notably the social manufacture of sociopaths and the importance of fatherhood. We wonder through most of the film's prolix length how a career criminal of the sort Costner plays can be so relentlessly charming, reliable, kind and generous. The scene that betrays the lie, Costner's white-hot ten-minute purgatory in the farm-worker's living room, is meant to justify the rest of the film. It provides no answers, however, especially when the wounded Costner becomes conciliatory and sweet all over again. All we can conclude is that Butch has made an ersatz criminal career out of killing people for beating their children.

The film focuses so centrally on the good-natured patter between Costner and pint-sized T.J. Lowther that Eastwood and co are reduced to cameos – a good thing, considering Eastwood's ID rehash of his grizzled cop routine, and Dern retracing her horrific steps from *Jurassic Park* as the professional bubblehead whose chief duty is divided between flaunting her more or less dubious training and screaming on cue. As the innocent, Lowther is fine in a performance created for the most part in the editing room, while Costner is simply Costner (albeit with a small pot belly). The perverse entertainment value inherent in watching an absurdly likeable and self-possessed movie star used to embodying goodness play a homicidal nutcase – even for ten minutes – is one of *A Perfect World*'s glorious consolations. Costner underplays the scene beautifully, and for a few moments we're in the presence of an authentic chaos. The other two hours are merely biding time.

Michael Atkinson

U.F.O.

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Tony Dow

Certificate
18

Distributor
Feature Film Company

Production Company
PolyGram Filmed
Entertainment
In association with
George Forster

Executive Producer
Peter Smith

Producer
Simon Wright

Line Producer
Paul Sarony

Production Co-ordinator
Kora McNulty

Location Manager
David Pinnington

Casting
Beth Charkham

Assistant Directors
Sean Guest

Sally Morgan
Sarah Dibsall

Screenplay
Richard Hall

Simon Wright

Roy 'Chubby' Brown

Director of Photography
Paul Wheeler

In colour

2nd Camera Operator
Jamie Harcourt

Editor
Geoff Hogg

Production Designer
David McHenry

Art Director
Martyn John

Special Effects Supervisor
Alan Whibley

Special Effects
1st Effects

Ian Scoones

Brian Smithies

Steve Crawley

David Watkins

Joe Geday

Music
Clever Music

Songs
"I Will Survive"

by Perren, Fekaris,
performed by Gloria
Gaynor; "Some Things
Are True" by

McNicholas, Cresswell,
performed by Yes No
People; "Get Down
on It" by Bell, Taylor,

Deodato, Mickens,
Smith, Bell, Brown,
performed by Kool
And the Gang

Choreography
Rachel Izen

Costume Design
Liz Da Costa

Costume Supervisor
Ros Ward

Make-up
Supervisor:

Julie Van Pragg

Artist:
Liz Davies

Titles/Opticals
General Screen

Entertainment

Digital Sound Editors
Nigel Galt

Ross Adams

Martin Cantwell

Sound Recordist
John Rodda

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists
Brian Saunders

Mike Dowson

Edward Colyer

Sound Effects
The Sound Design
Company

Stunt Co-ordinator
Rod Woodruff

Stunts
Lucy Allen

Cast
Roy 'Chubby' Brown

Himself

Sara Stockbridge

Zoe

Amanda Symonds
Ava

Roger Lloyd Pack
Solo

Shirley Anne Field
Supreme Commander

Sue Lloyd
Judge

Kiran Shah
Genghis Khan

Kenny Baker
Casanova

Rusty Goffe
Henry VIII

Anthony Georgiou
Dracula

James Culshaw
Man

Sheila Gill
Old Woman

Paul Sarony
Journalist

Ben Aris
Doctor

Laura Jackson
Guard

Robbie Dee
Claire Robinson

Band Members

Jenny Michelmores
Receptionist

Ken MacDonald
Plumber

Walter Sparrow
Old Codger

Alan Bodenham
Milkman

Shaun Curry
Barman

Jean Warren
Sheena

Mike Hallett
Snooker Player

Ken MacDonald
Plumber

Sam Britchford
Isabel Rua-Hunt

Alex Avenall
Karen Holle

Mandy Miller
Natalie George

Dancers

7,099 feet
79 minutes

● In a distant galaxy, a group of feminists from the 25th Century are monitoring the movements of the sexist comedian Roy 'Chubby' Brown. Arriving in Blackpool to perform his summer show, Chubby takes to the stage and launches into his cheeky, chauvinistic routine. Unknown to him, two of the feminists, spaceship commander Zoe and her assistant Ava, plan to kidnap him so he can stand trial for

his many years of telling offensive jokes. Whisked away to the spaceship in mid-routine, Chubby learns that he is charged with 'Gross Violation Of The Gender Supremacy Act'. Solo, a hermaphrodite from the planet Clitoris, represents Chubby in the court case, which threatens to go on for a very long time. Chubby tries to escape and has a variety of adventures aboard the spaceship, but is eventually recaptured. Found guilty, he is offered a choice of punishment. Not favouring castration, he agrees to accept a mystery penalty.

Returned to Earth, he wakes up to discover his wife has been having an affair with the milkman: she walks out on him, and he is left to cope on his own. Visiting the doctor for a check-up, he discovers that he is pregnant. There is a huge sensation in the press, with questions asked in the House of Commons. Chubby attends maternity classes and shops for baby clothes, apparently mellowed by the prospect of father/motherhood.

Solo, increasingly bitter at Zoe's high-handed treatment of him, appears in front of Chubby as the comedian rehearses his old act in front of an empty theatre, and lures him back to the spaceship. He has suggested that Zoe should persuade Chubby to make a full confession of his previous misdeeds, to be broadcast across the universe so she will get full credit for her part in his transformation. Solo knows such a scheme is sure to backfire.

After a painful labour, Chubby gives birth to a fine, bouncing baby through his rectum. It turns out that he has impregnated the rest of the crew, and the spaceship is now full of little baby Chubby Browns. Chubby is led to the microphone to make his confession, and at first seems genuinely regretful for his misdemeanours, but soon launches into his old routine. It turns out that none of the corrective treatment has had any effect at all.

● A chaotic, scatological mix of genres and themes, borrowing from TV sitcom, sci-fi and horror movies and anything else which comes to mind, *U.F.O.* is wildly uneven, often offensive, but with a cheerful inanity which goes some way to compensate for its grosser shortcomings. Action ranges from a very drab end-of-the-pier Blackpool to a high-kitsch outer space, where the costumes seem to be on loan from *Barbarella* and it looks as if Gerry Anderson has been drafted in to do the production design. Roy 'Chubby' Brown's humour is as lavatorial as ever. One scene, which sums up his comedy in a nutshell, finds him in the spaceship's sewage system, crawling through a vast network of tubes: inevitably, his head ends up poking through a toilet bowl.

There is hardly an instant in the entire movie when that indelible, leer-ing grin leaves his face. The tone is set early on, as Chubby and his mates, on the road to Blackpool, flash their backsides at a car-load of passing nuns. Over

the next 80 or so minutes, we endure bestiality, male pregnancy, an unending stream of smutty jokes, and several of Chubby's cheeky songs. Rather than curb the out-and-out sexism of his character, the film foregrounds it – the entire narrative is centred on a galactic court case, where 25th-century feminists try to bring him to book for his years of telling crude, chauvinistic jokes. Of course, this is a forlorn task: there's no way the 'fat bastard' is going to mend his ways, even after a course of *Clockwork Orange*-style corrective treatment and a stint of motherhood.

The film-makers themselves are stumped by what to do with the monster-in-goggles they have spawned. At times, they seem to be suggesting that Chubby, like Alf Garnett, is secretly undermining the very prejudices he airs with such glee by showing them to be as utterly grotesque as he is. Indeed, the production notes tell us that "much of his humour is cleverly contrived to speak for women and debunk the so-called macho male." Such special pleading seems ludicrous when you realize that the storyline allows him to impregnate an entire spaceship and ends with a triumphant endorsement of his stag humour.

The scriptwriters are fairly successful in cobbling together a treatment which allows Chubby to preserve his outsize stage persona without hampering the flow of the story. Director Tony Dow, who cut his teeth on BBC comedies like *Only Fools and Horses* and *Birds of a Feather*, keeps the narrative bubbling along, and manages to provide a framework for some very camp performances from Sara Stockbridge as the Spaceship Commander and Amanda Symonds as her assistant. There are some nice, vaguely surreal touches, as when Chubby is flushed to the bowels of the spaceship and runs into dwarf-sized versions of Genghis Khan, Dracula, Henry VIII and Casanova, who've been similarly banished for their offences against the Gender Supremacy Act. The picture is replete with the staples of silent comedy – chases, slapstick and endless visual gags. Brown may have the physique of Tweedledum, but he is surprisingly

nimble, and relies as much on movement as on dialogue to extract his laughs. Every so often, he'll utter some throwaway remark along the lines of "if I believe that, I'll eat straw with a donkey," and needless to say, his wayward metaphorical expressions are always realized visually. It's a device as old as the hills, but it works.

Generally, the script punishes its hero for his prurience. In a flashback, we see a young Chubby peering through a keyhole: he is rewarded for his voyeurism by being squirted in the eye with an aerosol can. At one stage, there is a shot of a horse box. From inside, we can hear Chubby murmuring tender endearments to his loved one. It is thoroughly predictable that after he has said a sad goodbye to his sweetheart, a sheep trots out of the box. Strangely, the film's best moments tend to come when Chubby is at his most subdued. When his wife leaves him, for instance, he slouches around the house, the dysfunctional, inept male so utterly baffled by domestic matters you almost feel sorry for him. But it never takes long for him to return to base camp. The comedy hits an outrageous nadir when he finally goes into labour: he is giving birth through the rectum, and when the nurses instruct him to push with all his might, Chubby obliges, but a stool, not a baby, first appears. (In its obsession with bodily functions and motherhood, *U.F.O.* occupies much of the same territory as Greenaway's *The Baby of Mâcon*, even if it is a bit light on the art historical references.)

The film was shot at Pinewood, and seems imbued with the cheap and cheerful spirit of the *Carry On* series and the Norman Wisdom comedies. Blithely derivative, often horribly misconceived, it almost has enough good-natured energy to excuse its own excesses. Ultimately, though, it seems caught on the horns of a dilemma – Chubby wants to be liked, even to be a family entertainer, but his own fat, obscene mouth means he is always going to be far too naughty for the kids, who would probably enjoy this film the most.

Geoffrey Macnab



Ooer, missus: Roy 'Chubby' Brown

Les Visiteurs

France 1993

Director: Jean-Marc Poiré

Certificate
15

Distributor
Arrow Film
Production Company
Gaumont
In association with
France 3 Cinema
Alpilles Productions
Amigo Productions
With the participation
of Canal Plus
The Languedoc-
Roussillon region

Producer
Alain Terzian
Production Co-ordinator
Philippe Lièvre
Production Manager
François D'Artemare

Post-production
Nathalie Delest

Casting
Celina Blanc

Assistant Directors
Paul Gueu
Isabelle Beauchesne
Pierre Guithaoumou
Laurence Coq
Gilles Bannier
Pierre Pochy
Gary Saint-Martin

Screenplay
Jean-Marie Poiré
Christian Clavier
Director of Photography
Jean-Yves Le Mener
In colour
Video Editing
Didier Ranz

Special Optical Effects
Excalibur

Matte Paintings
Jean-Marie Vives

Editor
Catherine Kelber
Production Designer
Hugues Tissandier

Set Decorator
Bertrand Seitz

Storyboard Artist
Philippe Savoir

Special Effects
Digital:
Duboi
Mechanical:
Jean-Marc Mouligné
3D Morphing
Buf Compagne

Music
Eric Lévi
Music Extracts
"Scottish Symphony",
"Concerto for Violin
and Orchestra in E
Minor" by Felix
Mendelssohn,
performed by Czech
Symphony Orchestra

Music Performed by
Czech Symphony
Orchestra
The English
Chamber Choir
Costume Design
Catherine Leterrier

Make-up
Muriel Baurens
Special Make-up Effects
Jacques Gastineau
Hairstylist
Patrick Archambault

Sound Editor
Jean Goudier
Sound Recordists
Jean-Charles Ruault
2nd Unit:
Frederic Hamelin
Music:
Dominik Borde
Dolby stereo
Sound Effects
Jérôme Lévy
Stunts
Mario Luraschi
Roland Neunreuther

Cast
Christian Clavier
Jacquouille La
Fripouille/Jacquart
Jean Reno
Godefroy de
Montmirail
Valérie Lemercier
Frénégonde de
Pouille/Béatrice
Marie-Anne Chazel
Ginette

Christian Bujeau
Jean-Pierre
Isabelle Nanty
Fabienne Morlot
Gérard Séty
Edgar Bernay
Didier Pain
King Louis VI
Jean-Paul Muel
Maréchal des
Logis Gibon
Ariel Seménoff
Jacqueline
Michel Peyrelon
Edouard Bernay
Pierre Vial
Wizard
Eusebius/Monsieur
Ferdinand
François Lalande
Priest

Didier Bénureau
Intern
Frédéric Baptiste
Freddy
Pierre Aussadat
Chief Sergeant Morlet
Tara Gano
Witch
Stéphanie Marie
Jean-Luc Caron
Anna Gaylor
Claire Magnin
Eric Averlant
Jean-Pierre Clami
Thierry Liagre
David Gabison
Patrick Burgel
Paul Bandey
Jérôme Berthoud
Amandine Boyadjian
Yohan Boyadjian
Katia Delagarde
Eric Denize
Bela Gruschka
Dominique Hulin
Jean-Guillaume Le Dantec

9,601 feet
107 minutes

Subtitles

1122. The French are at war with the English Normans. After bravely hacking off the head of an Anglo-Norman scoundrel, French knight Godefroy is rewarded with the title of Count of Montmirail by the French king Louis le Gros. Godefroy is then expected to claim the hand of Frénégonde, the Duchess of Pouille, to seal his nobility. On the way to meet

her, he and his men pass the lair of the witch of Malcombe. Godefroy takes the witch captive, intending to burn her alive, but the witch manages to pour an hallucinogenic potion into his drinking flask. When Godefroy arrives at the Pouille castle, he believes that his father-in-law has turned into a bear and shoots him between the eyes with a crossbow. In her grief, Frénégonde takes the veil and Godefroy vows never to marry another.

Godefroy turns to the wizard Eusebius, who reveals the existence of time-tunnels. He suggests that Godefroy travels back to the moment just before the crossbow was shot in order to divert the bolt. He then forgets to include quail's eggs, a crucial ingredient of the magic time travel potion, and instead Godefroy and his servant Jacquesouille are sent to the 1990s. After various traumatic encounters with the twentieth century, Godefroy seeks sanctuary in a church. When Godefroy announces that he is the Count of Montmirail, the local priest contacts the present-day countess, Béatrice. She thinks Godefroy must be her long-lost cousin Hubert, a wayward racing driver last heard of in Borneo. When they meet, the knight is surprised at the resemblance between Béatrice and Frénégonde. Things get out of hand when Godefroy insists on being treated with the respect due to a feudal lord. Béatrice calls the riot police who beat up Godefroy and take him away for psychological tests. On his return, Béatrice and her husband, a social-climbing dentist, decide to take him in.

To return to his own time, Godefroy must find the magician's spell book, which is buried in the castle's dungeon. Béatrice explains that the old family seat has been turned into a hotel, managed by the foppish, nouveau riche Jacques-Henri – who happens to look exactly like Jacquesouille. Béatrice checks Godefroy and Jacquesouille into the hotel. In the master bedroom, they find a secret passage to the dungeon, but the spell book has been completely destroyed by age. Next to it, they find a scribbled telephone number, which leads them to a certain Dr Eusèbe who gives them the recipe of the potion.

Jacquesouille has discovered the pleasures of post-revolutionary France and no longer wants to return to feudal times. Godefroy insists they return so that he can give himself a noble lineage. Second time around, he kills the witch and stops himself from shooting his father-in-law. But, back in the 1990s, Jacquesouille has managed to swap clothes with Jacques-Henri, who is transported to the twelfth century.

There is an unforgettable moment in *Les Visiteurs* where the time travellers are invited to use the bathroom before dinner. When the prim hostess returns to see how they are getting on, she finds them kneeling down performing their ablutions in the toilet bowl. Most of the jokes in this film are generated by this kind of historical faux pas, so don't expect ►

◄ Python-style sophistication. Despite the obvious parallels with *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *Les Visiteurs* has more in common with that other British comedy export, Benny Hill (or Ben Yeel, as he is lovingly known in France). People fall over a lot, or hit each other, or shout very loud, and there is an obsession with bodily functions – this is often gratuitous, as when Godefroy and Jacquesouille are magically transported to the twentieth century and all that remains is two large piles of excrement.

Les Visiteurs has its roots in vaudeville, a form which still survives in the *café théâtres* of Paris. Christian Clavier, who co-wrote the script, and Valérie Lemercier can both still be seen treading the boards in these small theatre clubs. It is a world which remains largely unknown outside France, although certain of its stars have made the transition into cinema: Miou-Miou and Coluche both began their careers with the comedy troupe ‘Splendid’ of which Clavier is now the star.

The presence of Clavier and Lemercier makes a change from the usual po-faced seriousness of French film stars. While screen actor Jean Reno is wonderfully deadpan as the sappy aristo Godefroy, the film is dominated by the over-the-top theatricals of the vaudeville acts. Clavier is great as the effete fop Jacques-Henri, while Lemercier’s performance as Godefroy’s excruciating descendant Béatrice is a refreshing parody of stuck-up French femininity. Somehow it would be hard to imagine Isabelle Adjani mincing around in a pastel polo shirt or wailing “*Hyper-sympa!*” with quite this much gusto.

Dumping a medieval lord and his serf in present-day France allows for commentary on the foibles of bourgeois France in the 1990s. *Les Visiteurs* could easily be shown to British school students as a guide to the French class system. It demonstrates better than most audio-visual aids that it is the lumpen-bourgeoisie who are the dominant class in France today and that the aristocracy is just a subculture among many. However, this is stretching a point: *Les Visiteurs* is not meant as a sociology lesson. Indeed, its makers have made it clear that it is intended as an antidote to the over-intellectual cinema that has dominated France since the New Wave.

Les Visiteurs has been a massive hit in France. Last year an average of 20,000 people a day went to see it. This easily outstrips the success of other recent historical blockbusters such as *Cyrano de Bergerac* or *Jean de Florette* and, in fact, there hasn’t been a French film since the 60s with such popular appeal. Elements of the old-French vocabulary used by Godefroy and Jacquesouille have even entered everyday Parisian slang. It is highly unlikely that *Les Visiteurs* will enjoy the same success internationally, because the references are so very French. But you never know – apparently the toilet bowl scene went down very well in Japan.

Martin Bright

RE-RELEASE

Nuovo Cinema Paradiso (Cinema Paradiso: The Special Edition)

Italy/France 1989

Director: Giuseppe Tornatore

Certificate 15	Dubbing Supervisor Cesare Barbetti
Distributor Metro Tartan	Dubbing Mixer Stefano Nissolino
Production Companies Les Films Ariane (Paris)/ Cristaldi Film (Rome)	Sound Recordists Massimo Loffredi
In association with RAI/TRE/T.F.	Music: Franco Finetti
In collaboration with Forum Pictures SPA	Sound Re-recordist Alberto Doni
Executive Producer RAI: Gabriella Carosio	Sound Effects Sound Track
Producer Franco Cristaldi	Repertory Cinema Research Vanna Paoli
Special Edition Executive Giancarlo Carotenuto	Cast
Production Supervisors Salvo Lupo Aureliano Luppi	Philippe Noiret Alfredo
Production Co-ordinator Riccardo Caneva	Jacques Perrin Salvatore
Production Managers Aldo Buzzanca	Salvatore Cascio Salvatore as a child
Special Edition: Lillo Caprano	Marco Leonardi Salvatore as an adolescent
Production Organizer Mino Barbera	Agnese Nano Elena
Assistant Director Giuseppe Giglietti	Antonella Attili Maria (young)
Screenplay Giuseppe Tornatore	Isa Danieli Anna
Screenplay Collaborator Vanna Paoli	Pupella Maggio Maria (old)
Director of Photography Blasco Giurato	Leopoldo Trieste Father Adelfio
In colour	Enzo Cannavale Spaccafico
Camera Operator Giuseppe Di Blase	Leo Gullotta Bill Sticker
Lion Animation Alvaro Passeri	Tano Cimarosa Blacksmith
Editor Mario Morra	Nicola Di Pinto Mad Man
Production Designer Andrea Cristani	Roberta Lena Lia
Special Effects Filli Corridori	Nino Terzo Peppino’s Father
Music Ennio Morricone	Brigitte Fossey
Love Theme Andrea Morricone	Nellina Lagana
Music Performed by Unione Musicista di Roma	Turi Giuffrida
Violin Solo: Franco Tamponi	Mariella Lo Giudice
Music Co-ordinator Enrico de Melis	Girogio Libassi
Costume Design Beatrice Bordone	Beatrice Palme
Make-up Maurizio Trani	Ignazio Pappalardo
Hair Stylist Paolo Borzelli	Angela Leontini
Titles/Opticals Penta Studio	Mimmo Mignemi
	Margherita Mignemi
	Giuseppe Pellegrino
	Turi Killer
	Angelo Tosto
	Concetta Borpagano
	Franco Catalano
	15,731 feet
	175 minutes
	Subtitles

● Salvatore, a successful film-maker, receives a telephone call from his native Sicily. His mother’s message – “Alfredo is dying” – unleashes memories of his childhood in the village of Giancaldo during World War Two. With his father missing presumed dead, Toto (as he was called then) neglects his duties as an altar boy to haunt the Cinema Paradiso under the benevolent eye of Alfredo the projectionist: sneaking into pre-

views when the week’s film is run through for the priest to censor, and begging Alfredo to give him the excised frames (mostly kissing scenes), which he keeps under his bed at home, and learning the art of projection in return for letting Alfredo crib from him in the school exam he is trying to pass as an adult. When Alfredo is blinded in a nitrate fire from which Toto rescues him, Toto becomes his eyes when the cinema is re-opened with kissing scenes at last shown intact. When Alfredo retires, Toto takes over the projectionist’s job, starts shooting his own documentary and falls in love with Elena, a new rich girl in town. When the affair fizzles out while Toto is doing his military service and Elena is away at university, Toto heeds Alfredo’s advice to leave Sicily and make something of his love for the cinema.

Returning home for the first time in 20 years, Salvatore attends Alfredo’s funeral. While he wanders the much-changed streets of the village, he sees a girl who is the spitting image of Elena. He follows her and tracks down her mother, who is indeed his former girlfriend. It turns out that they had misunderstood each other when Elena failed to turn up at a rendezvous at the Paradiso. Salvatore learns that Alfredo had never passed on a message from her, and that he had failed to find a note she left him. They make love in the car. Salvatore goes back to the Paradiso, just before it is about to be demolished, and finds the note. He rings Elena to talk about their future, but she tells him they should not meet again. In a package bequeathed to him by Alfredo, Salvatore finds a film comprising censored kisses spliced together in an endless love scene.

● The outstanding virtue of this elongated version of Giuseppe Tornatore’s surprise box-office and critical success is that it resolves the relationship between the adolescent Salvatore and his apparently aloof, wealthy girlfriend Elena, an episode which was barely developed in the shorter version and consequently made marginal by the more profound bond between the aspiring film-maker and the wondrous world of the cinema. Virtually all Tornatore’s restored cuts are taken up by a lengthy reconciliation scene between the middle-aged director and his old flame, who mysteriously abandoned him 20 years earlier, instigating his move to Rome and professional success. In attributing responsibility for the young couple’s break-up to the old Alfredo, who, as Elena wisely retrospects, was “saving” Salvatore from the banal caprices of romantic love, the film gains a welcome edge of bitterness to counter the over-rich concoction of nostalgia and sentimentality which has gone before; it is made much clearer that the price of professional success for Salvatore has been personal failure, a succession of meaningless relationships with women masking the feelings of betrayal and abandonment that have lingered ever since

Elena’s abrupt departure. The wisdom of Alfredo’s decision is thus questioned, to the extent that the demolition of the old cinema takes on a more equivocal quality, and the old man’s legacy to his unknowing protégé – the montage of censored love scenes – takes on a distinctly and uncharacteristically ironic tone. It is unfortunate that the new-found subtlety of the film is gained at the expense of the shorter version’s surer sense of pace; the power of the dénouement is substantially diminished, following as it does the twisted exposition of the lovers’ misunderstandings and explanations.

Whether audiences will respond positively to the re-working of what has become something of a minor classic in Britain (voted the best film of the 1980s in a recent *Guardian* poll) is questionable. The unambiguous love for the movies expressed in Tornatore’s original struck an extraordinary and perhaps surprising chord with this country’s public. It is by no means a superficial treatment; the clips from the movies shown at the Paradiso in themselves provide a telling narrative of recent cinema history: from Visconti’s *La terra trema*, which keeps the audience gripped, silent and enraptured, to the cruder melodrama of Raffaello Matarazzo’s *Catene*, prompting mass weeping in the stalls; then, following the decline of the censorious priest’s influence, the resplendent sensuality of Silvana Mangano in Alberto Lattuada’s *Anna*, satisfying (fatally?) the baying audience’s wish to see, at long last, a “kiss” on the screen, a development which could only lead to Sharon Stone; and finally, the pretentious existential angst of Antonioni’s *Il grido*, after which the audience angrily demands its money back. Tornatore doesn’t hammer home the point, but the predatory forces of home entertainment are just around the corner, and cinema itself, he contends, is partly to blame.

What is perhaps the most surprising aspect of the film’s popularity is the ease with which British audiences – whose tolerance for cutesiness has rarely strayed beyond Hayley Mills – took to the cloying performance of Salvatore Cascio as the young Toto, and to the overt sentimentality of the film generally. It seems that the golden-hued air of dreamy nostalgia placed in a Mediterranean setting, complete with shouting peasants, luscious sunsets, doe-eyed *bambini*, funny fascists, village idiots and the Araldite-bonding of traditional family life, avoids all the baggage which a more explicitly British treatment inevitably brings on board – Victorian repression, twilight-of-Empire anguish, class struggle and greyness. The Med effect is a potent brew indeed (ask Peter Mayle), not to be underestimated in box office calculations. Just add a dash of the mythical age of cinema and one can place Tornatore’s triumph in its proper context; but perhaps the broader resonances of his original vision are not quite what we want to hear right now.

Peter Aspden

RE-RELEASE

Tokyo Monogatari (Tokyo Story)

Japan 1953

Director: Yasujiro Ozu

Certificate	Nobuo Nakamura
U	Kurazo Kaneko
Distributor	Shiro Osaka
Artificial Eye	Keizo Hirayama
Production Company	Hisao Toake
Shochiku Ofuna Studio	Osamu Hattori
Producer	Shizuka Murase
Takeshi Yamamoto	Minoru Hirayama
Production Manager	Mitsuhiro Mori
Tomiji Shimizu	Isamu Hirayama
Assistant Director	Teruko Magaoka
Kozo Yamamoto	Yone
Screenplay	Mutsuko Sakura
Kogo Noda	Woman at Oden
Yasujiro Ozu	counter
Director of Photography	Toyoko Takahashi
Yuharu Atsuta	Woman next door
B/w	Toru Abe
Editor	Railway Clerk
Yoshiyasu Hamamura	Sachiko Sanya
Art Director	Woman at the
Tatsuo Hamada	Apartment
Set Design	Junko Anan
Toshio Takahashi	Hair Salon Assistant
Set Decorator	Ryoko Mizuki
Setsutarō Moriya	Yoshiko Togawa
Music	Hair Salon Customers
Takanori "Kojun" Saito	Kazuhiro Itokawa
Costume Design	Tenant
Taizo Saito	Fumio Toyama
Sound Recordist	Patient
Yoshisaburo Senoo	Keiji Morozumi
Recording Technology	Policeman
Michiru Kaneko	Tsutomu Nijima
	Company Section Chief
Cast	Akira Suzuki
Chishu Ryu	Clerk
Shukichi Hirayama	Yoshiko Tashiro
Chieko Higashiyama	Haruko Chichibu
Tomi Hirayama	Maids at the Inn
Setsuko Hara	Takashi Miki
Noriko	Singer at the Inn
Haruko Sugimura	Toshinosuke Nagao
Shige Kaneko	Other Doctor
So Yamamura	
Koichi Hirayama	12,213 feet
Kuniko Miyake	136 minutes
Fumiko	
Kyoko Kagawa	Subtitles
Kyoko	
Eiji Tono	
Sanpei Numata	

The elderly Shukichi Hirayama and his wife Tomi live in retirement in Onomichi, a port on Japan's Inland Sea, with their younger daughter Kyoko. They undertake a trip to Tokyo to visit their son Koichi and daughter Shige, both married and with families of their own; they also plan a brief stop-over in Oskaka to see their younger son Keizo. On arrival in Tokyo they stay with Koichi, a paediatrician, and are soon conscious of disrupting the household; Koichi's wife Fumiko is a model of formal politesse, but the elder son Minoru resents giving up his study to provide an extra bedroom and the younger son Isamu takes the opportunity to be even more mischievous than usual. The only person who welcomes them with selfless sincerity, despite her straitened circumstances, is their daughter-in-law Noriko, wife of their son Shoji, missing presumed dead in the war. The major family event planned to mark their visit, a Sunday excursion, has to be cancelled at the last minute when Koichi is called away to a patient.

Shukichi and Tomi move on to stay with Shige, who runs a hair salon in the front room of her home. Her husband Kurazo has no idea how to entertain the visitors beyond buying them desserts and inviting them to the public bath, and Shige, reluctant to spend money on them, asks Noriko to take a day off work to show them around Tokyo. The sightseeing trip is a success, and that evening Noriko invites the couple to her modest home. Shige and Koichi decide to share the cost of sending their parents to the hot-spring resort Atami for a few days, to get them off their backs. The old couple enjoy Atami at first but after a sleepless night listening to rowdy young people in the hotel decide to return to Tokyo immediately. As they prepare to leave, Tomi suffers a dizzy spell.

Their early return inconveniences Shige, who has invited guests for dinner, and so Tomi goes to spend the evening with Noriko while Shukichi looks up his old friend Osamu Hattori. Late that night the police escort Shukichi, Hattori and their friend Sanpei Numata to Shige's home; all three are incapably drunk after an evening spent reminiscing and discussing the disappointments of parenthood. Next day the entire family gathers at Tokyo Station to see off the old couple on their return home.

But they spend the next few days at Keizo's home in Osaka, after Tomi is taken ill on the train. And they have hardly got home before Kyoko is sending telegrams to her brothers and sister to say that Tomi is gravely ill. Koichi and Shige reluctantly but dutifully rush to Onomichi with their mourning clothes, closely followed by Noriko. All are present when Tomi dies; Keizo arrives just in time for the funeral. At the wake, Shige disgusts Kyoko by demanding various of her mother's effects. Koichi and Shige return to Tokyo without delay, and Keizo remembers a baseball game in Osaka that he wants to catch. Noriko is left to console Kyoko, who is furious at the attitudes and behaviour of her siblings. In saying goodbye to Noriko, Shukichi urges her to forget her late husband and remarry while she has the chance; he gives her Tomi's prized pocket watch as a keepsake. Kyoko, a primary school teacher, is at work when Noriko takes the train back to Tokyo. Shikuchi is left to face the future alone.

Ozu described *Tokyo Monogatari* as his "most melodramatic" movie, an observation taken by most western commentators, dazzled by the director's minimalist style and resolutely quotidian material, as ironic. But irony was never Ozu's preferred tone, and his comment surely reflected the film's uncharacteristic explicitness: this is an almost didactic film about the disintegration of Japanese family values, full of characters and incidents designed to spell out social and psychological points with diagrammatic clarity. In calling the film "melodramatic", Ozu may also have had in the back of his mind the story's origin in co-writer



Generation Game: Setsuko Hara, Chishu Ryu

Kogo Noda's memories of the 1936 Leo McCarey film *Make Way For Tomorrow*, which similarly contrasts the emotional stoicism of an elderly couple financially ruined in the Depression with the brash impatience of their urbanised children but does so with a directness entirely normal in Hollywood movies.

Although it is not a precise match with any other Ozu film in theme, tone or structure, *Tokyo Monogatari* obviously shares characteristics and concerns with many of them. Its interests in parent-offspring relations, in urban/rural contrasts, and in the evanescence of happiness are all entirely consonant with earlier films, from *Hitori Musuko* (*The Only Son*, 1936) through conservative wartime films like *Toda-ke No Kyodai* (*Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family*, 1941) and *Chichi Ariki* (*There Was a Father*, 1942) to other films of the post-war 'reconstruction' like *Banshun* (*Late Spring*, 1949) and *Banushu* (*Early Summer*, 1951). It also uses most of Ozu's well-known visual tropes, from the use of low camera-positions for domestic interiors to patterns of cutting based on visual analogies rather than conventional eyeline-matches. What's different here, is, again, the overall explicitness of the film's aim. The fact that this is a film in which the main characters frequently and directly discuss the issues that confront them (for example, parents' disappointment in their children's levels of assessment, or a young woman's disgust at her elder sister's uncaring meanness) militates against both the psychological nuancing and the structural playfulness that Ozu elsewhere used freely.

In part, the film's overt seriousness springs from its persistent undercurrent of social commentary. This is absolutely a film of its moment: it faithfully records everything from Tokyo's post-war rebuilding boom to the raucous and hedonistic behaviour of young people in a hot-spring hotel, the latter an early sign of the 'Sun Tribe' delinquency that was to become Japan's hottest social topic only three years later. (Since Ozu and Noda habitually retreated to hot-spring resorts themselves to work on their scripts, it's amusing to speculate that they themselves had experienced the same kind of sleepless night suffered by the Hirayama couple). Equally topical was the core theme of the chasm between traditionalist, rural parents and their

city-based sons and daughters; the breakdown in age-old family support structures in the years of American occupation and 'democratisation' was a widely discussed topic in the early 1950s. And the financial plights of Koichi and Shige, one struggling to run a suburban medical practice, the other managing a tawdry hair salon, both in conspicuously unfashionable areas of the city, are observed with the same fastidious eye for social and economic demographics.

The characters are also somewhat less nuanced than in many other Ozu films, even when played by the directors' favorites from the Shochiku 'stock company' of contract actors. Haruko Sugimura's account of Shige, for example, is a nakedly explicit picture of the death of sentiment: the woman is a cypher for selfishness, opportunism and greed. Ozu allows himself one set-piece of comedy (in an otherwise generally sombre movie) at her expense: the scene in which she is embarrassed to have her drunken father and two equally comatose strangers dumped on her late at night by the police. The chief exceptions to this tendency towards caricature are Shukichi, the emotionally repressed patriarch played by Chishu Ryu, and Noriko, the more than dutiful daughter-in-law played by Setsuko Hara, Japanese cinema's 'perennial virgin'. Shukichi's feelings for his wife are expressed only silently, in worldless scenes after her death, while his only avenue for open discussion of his frustrations as a parent is while drinking with long-unseen buddies in a bar. Noriko, shown to be both a hyper-efficient 'office lady' and a model of selfless consideration, is given dialogue scenes (most notably with Kyoko and Shukichi, in quick succession at the film's climax) to admit her inner doubts and insecurities, especially in relation to her fidelity or otherwise to her late husband. Both actors achieve the deepening of their characters with practised ease and supreme conviction.

Aside from Taizo Saito's lush but sparingly used Hollywood-style score, the film's soundtrack is dominated by three elements: chirping crickets, boats chugging and sounding their sirens, and train noises. The crickets evoke the rural ambience of Onomichi, while the other two sound elements evoke travel and the space between places – and by extension, people. But Ozu is far too subtle and humane an artist to reduce his sound design to a matter of schematic symbols. In a film concerned with constant journeying, it's significant that the only shot of anyone in the act of travelling is the image of Noriko on the train back to Tokyo in the end. In the shot, she pulls out Tomi's heirloom, the pocket watch, and examines it with deep emotion. The shot mysteriously clinches the association between the idea (or sound) of travel and the motif of evanescence. This may be the least 'melodramatic' moment in the film. It is also probably the most truly Ozu-esque.

Tony Rayns

SHORT FILMS

Ambition

USA 1991

Director: Hal Hartley

Certificate	Cast
Not yet issued	George Feaster
Distributor	George
ICA Projects	Patricia Sullivan
Production Company	Trish
Good Machine, Inc for	Chris Buck
Alive From Off Center	Buck
In association with	Jim McCauley
Twin Cities Public	The Boss
Television, Inc	David Troup
Alive From Off Center	Guy
Executive Producer	Margaret Mendelson
Alyce Dissette	Girl
Producers	Lasker
Ted Hope	Larry Meistrich
James Schamus	Thugs
Alive From Off Center:	RickGroel
John Ligon	Man
Associate Producer	Michael McGarry
Larry Meistrich	Bill Sage
Production Supervisor	Casey Finch
Bill Oliver	Adam Bresnick
Assistant Directors	Nancy Kricorian
Bob Gosse	Elizabeth Feaster
J. Miller Tobin	Francie Swift
Sheila Waldron	Lisa Gorlitsky
Screenplay	Mark V. Lake
Hal Hartley	Bob Gosse
Director of Photography	Ernesto Gerona
Michael Spiller	JulieSukman
In colour	
Production Designer	350 feet
Steven Rosenzweig	9 minutes
Music	
Ned Rifle	16mm
Wardrobe	
Alexandra Welker	
Make-up	
Judy Chin	
Titles	
Bob Baker	
Sound Editor	
Matthew Price	
Sound re-recordist	
Reilly Stelle	

George, a New Yorker, leaves his flat and sets off for work insisting, “I’m good at what I do”. On his way there, a number of men and women run up and attack him, one after another, but he despatches them all with well-aimed punches and karate chops. He arrives and walks through a corridor hung with pictures. People congratulate him. It is just possible he is the artist. After a couple of desultory conversations, two more people attack him and this time he finds it harder to repel them, but amid the struggle shouts out valiantly, “I love England not because of Churchill, but for rock and roll and Virginia Woolf.”

This looks a lot better on the page than it does on the screen. In one of three short films newly released as a package, Hartley pays his dues to Godard (and Buñuel) in a welter of jump-cuts and non-sequiturs. Shock tactics and surrealism do not suit him – his own twist on reality is skewed and satisfying enough to make it frustrating when he falls back onto other people’s. Almost all of his large troupe of talented regular players are (under-) employed in the “run up and attack him” sequence – which as a misuse of rising talent may in future years come to rival *The Big Chill*.

Ben Thompson

Surviving Desire

USA 1989

Director: Hal Hartley

Certificate	Los Euclids; “Girl With a Gun” by Catherine Crane, Albert Garzon, performed by Kings of Wyoming; “Thrilled tothe Marrow” by and performed by Das Damen; “Referee” by Catherine Crane, performed by The Great Outdoors; “Gonna Miss You” performed by The Great Outdoors; “Color of Your Mind” by and performed by Neighbourhood Dilemma; “Drug Test” by Ira Kaplan, performed by Yo La Tengo
Distributor	Costume Design
ICA Projects	Alexandra Welker
Production Company	Make-up/Hair
Kino Karamazov for	Judy Chin
American Playhouse	Sound Recordist
In association with	Jeff Pullman
WMG	Sound Re-recordist
Executive Producer	Reilly Stelle
Jerome Brownstein	
Producer	
Ted Hope	Cast
Associate Producer	Martin Donovan
James Schamus	Jude
Production Co-ordinator	MattMalloy
Beth A. Boyd	Henry
Production Manager	Rebecca Nelson
Cecilia Kate Roque	Katie
Location Manager	JulieSukman
Ann Markel	Jill
Casting	Mary Ward
Wendy Ettinger	Sophie
Assistant Directors	Thomas J. Edwards
Steve Apicella	George Feaster
Brian Gutherman	Lisa Gorlitsky
Pam Koffler	Emily Kunstler
Screenplay	John MacKay
Hal Hartley	Jim McCauley
Director of Photography	Vinny Rutherford
Michael Spiller	Gary Sauer
In colour	Steve Schub
Editor	Patricia Sullivan
Steven Rosenzweig	David Troup
Art Director	
Karin Wiesel	
Scenic Artist	
Laurie Frederick	
Music	
Ned Rifle	
Music Performed by	
The Great Outdoors	
Lead Vocals/Guitars:	
Hub Moore	
Drums:	
John Sharples	
Vocals/Guitars:	
Dan Castelli	
Vocals/Bass Guitar:	
Craig Adams	
Songs	
“Rue des jours” by	
and performed by	
Amy Fairweather,	
Barry Breenhut;	
“Can’t Be Bothered”	
by and performed by	

Jude, a college professor, reads to his students from Dostoyevsky. They shout in protest and many walk out in disgust. He has been teaching the same paragraph for a month and a half. One disgruntled pupil gets up to remonstrate and Jude attacks him. In the canteen he discusses the situation with his philosophical PhD student friend Bob. who suggests that he might be having a crisis of faith.

One member of his class, the beautiful Sophie, seems to find some purpose in his teaching, and Jude tells Bob he is falling in love with her. She is aware of – and intrigued by – his growing infatuation. Jude hangs around at the bookshop where she works and they arrange to meet in a bar. Outside, a woman called Katie asks Jude to marry her; she does the same to every man who passes. The date with Sophie takes place and a courtship proceeds, although she is reluctant to let her friends know what is going on, in case they think she is sleeping with him to get better grades.

Bob gets chucked out of college and

starts a job in the bookshop. He warns Jude that Sophie is not serious. He loses his job, and gets drunk. When Katie asks him to marry her, he says yes. They argue. Jude and Sophie sleep together. As she leaves his house she meets Bob but denies knowing Jude, who is very upset when he finds out, and confronts her in a campus cafe. Sophie tells him she doesn’t want to get involved, and reluctantly reads him some of a short story she has been writing about him. Jude tells her she should change the sex of the protagonist, she does and is briefly chastened. Then he overturns their table and storms off. At a petrol station he meets Katie and asks her to marry him, but she says no. In class he lays out the bare bones of Dostoyevsky’s life and says he can’t teach them any more.

An *American Playhouse* production initially aimed at the small screen, Hal Hartley’s TV movie makes few concessions to the genre conventions of heart-warming melodrama. It is a rigorously mannered literary love story in which the excellent Martin Donovan gets another lead role after his bravura performance as the endearingly psychotic TV repairman in *Trust*. Neither this, nor the two shorter shorts that accompany it, is in the same class as either the funny and strangely beautiful *Trust* or its delightful predecessor *The Unbelievable Truth*. But anyone concerned that Hartley’s great early promise might have dissolved into a slush of affectation should bear in mind that these new films were made before the pretty but slightly vacuous *Simple Men*, and his most recent 30-minute short *Flirt* finds him firmly back on track. Who needs a linear career progression anyway?

Surviving Desire starts out like a grown-up, low-budget *Dead Poets Society*. The students’ outrage (“We’re paying for this, teach us something new!”) and Jude’s feisty defence of his decision to spend six weeks on one paragraph (“It’s an important paragraph”) promise an entertaining debate on the tension between material and spiritual goals in higher education. But, as so often, a tiny minority spoils it for the rest. Mary Ward as Sophie has been marked down by the director as the new Audrey Hepburn. She struggles womanfully with the demon rucksack of “wanting to be a writer” – the death-knell of many a better-drawn character – but in the end it’s too much for her.

Surviving Desire is finally just too cute for its own good. The unfortunate flipside of a lot of sharp Woody Allenish dialogue (“You’re having a crisis of faith” – “But I’m an atheist”) is portentous suburbanite twaddle (“All pain is desire”) worthy of the master. Donovan’s genius for compressed misery doesn’t get much to focus on, but it still, with the help of Ned Rifle’s typically resonant score, just about carries the film. And for anyone still savouring the great random formation dancing interlude in *Simple Men*, there’s another one here.

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Ben Thompson

Theory of Achievement

USA 1991

Director: Hal Hartley

Certificate	Songs
Not yet issued	“Let Me Win Lotto”,
Distributor	“Tango” by Jeffrey
ICA Projects	Howard; “Die In My
Production Company	Dreams” by Ned Rifle
Yo Productions Limited	Wardrobe
# 2	Cate Cooper
For Alive From	Make-up
Off Center	Judy Chin
Producers	Title Design
Ted Hope	Robert Baker
Larry Meistrich	Sound Editor
Production Co-ordinator	Jeff Pullman
Rebecca Feig	
Production Manager	Cast
Sarah Vogel	Bob Gosse
Casting	Jessica Sager
Caroline Sinclair	Jeffrey Howard
Assistant Director	William Sage
Ted Hope	Elina Löwensohn
Screenplay	Naledi Tshazibane
Hal Hartley	Nick Gomez
Director of Photography	M.C. Bailey
Michael Spiller	Ingrid Rudefors
In colour	
Production Designer	650 feet
Steven Rosenzweig	18 minutes
Additional Music	
Ned Rifle	16mm
Piano Performed by	
John Stearns	

An educated but down-at-heel young man tries to hustle real estate in a bedraggled part of Brooklyn. He has sublet his girlfriend’s apartment to a young would-be songwriter whose tempestuous lover locks herself in the bathroom and refuses to come out until her boyfriend promises to quit his day job. Other young under-achievers mill around in a diner and then, back at the flat, there is a kind of party – much philosophy is quoted and someone sings a song about wanting to win the lottery. They all debate what it means to be “young, middle-class, college-educated. unskilled, white and broke”. The would-be housing entrepreneur succumbs to a rare attack of philanthropy and decides to let the couple have *his* apartment.

A minor companion volume to Whit Stillman’s *Metropolitan*, this short shows how Stillman’s characters might have ended up if they hadn’t had trust funds. The opening premise is nice: Brooklyn as the next Paris because “an art capital needs to be a place where people can afford to live”. But Hartley’s auteurial foibles are out of control here – there are too many dark-haired actresses with exotic European accents, too many people opening books and reading out uninteresting quotations to each other, too many stagey face-slaps. The sudden flashes of self-awareness with which his characters are always illuminated seem to be merging together into a Douglas Coupland-style wash of generational generalisations. The lottery song is funny, though, as is the final stage of the protagonist’s self-realisation – “Young, middle class, college-educated, broke, unskilled, white... and drunk”.

Ben Thompson

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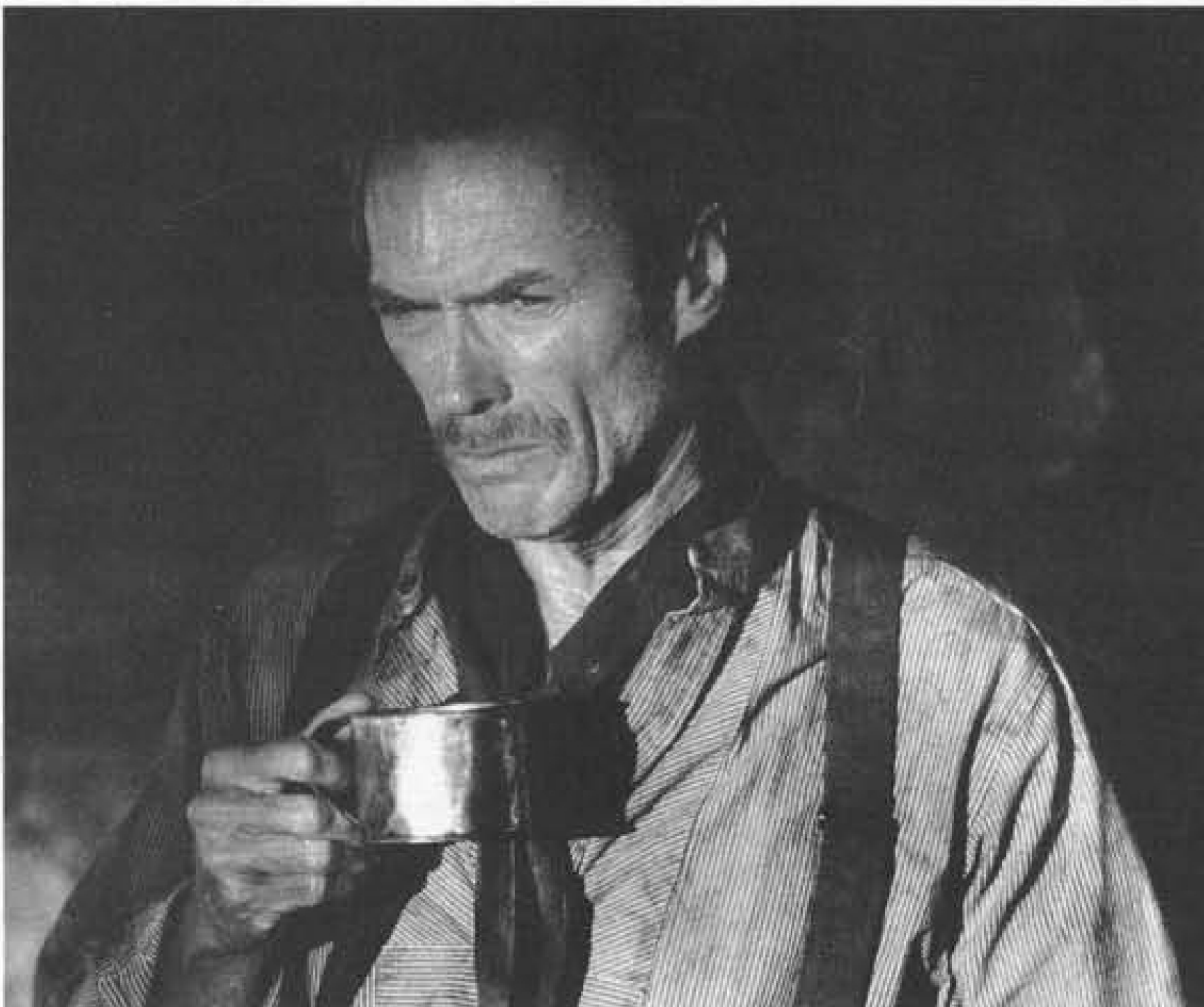
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VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Return of the Western: director and star of 'Unforgiven' Clint Eastwood

Unforgiven

Director Clint Eastwood/USA 1993

First chance to buy a copy of Eastwood's finest, most mature Western in which he plays an old outlaw whose last bounty trip becomes a quest to redeem himself and honour the name of his deceased wife. Pig farmer Walter Munny (Clint Eastwood) sets off with the foolhardy and near-blind "Schofield Kid" (Jaimz Woolvett) and old pal Ned Logan (Morgan Freeman) to track down two cowhands who have scarred a whore. The local whorehouse has raised the reward money and attracted a host of bounty hunters, all of whom the bullying sheriff "Little Bill" Daggett (Gene Hackman)

wants off his patch. Genre enthusiasts will be able to spot the many references to Eastwood's own career and to other Westerns – Carlo Lizzani's *Requiescant* (in the protagonist's relationship with a group of prostitutes) and Arthur Penn's *The Left-Handed Gun* (in the character of biographer W.W. Beauchamp), to name but two. Although it would have been fascinating to see Coppola's version, had he managed to get studio backing for David Webb Peoples' script ten years ago, it's hard to imagine any director imbuing the script with so much meaning or dignity as has Eastwood.

(S&S October 1992)

● Retail; Warner S012531; Price £12.99; Certificate 15



The last supper: Philippe Noiret and friend in 'La Grande bouffe'

La Grande bouffe (Blow-Out)

Director Marco Ferreri/France/Italy 1973

It's easy to forget how funny and well-acted Ferreri's exercise in bad taste seemed the first time round. It may now appear an over-long schoolboy joke but, if you ignore the blatant misogyny and don't eat for a few hours afterwards, a splendid time is still guaranteed. Four bored middle-aged men – a sex-crazy pilot (Marcello Mastroianni), a master chef (Ugo Tognazzi), a TV host (Michel

Piccoli) and a judge (Philippe Noiret) – meet at a secluded town house literally to eat themselves to death. Aided by three prostitutes and a schoolmistress (Andrea Ferreol), who stays to the bitter end, they achieve their aim in increasingly perverse fashion. Particularly impressive is the manner of Tognazzi's dispatch after he has eaten a few hundredweight of pâté. This is the first time *La Grande bouffe* has been granted a certificate in this country.

(MFB No. 481)

● Retail; Art House AMO 6013; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday

Director Adam Marcus/USA 1993

Despite losing a gaudy special effects sequence in which a teenager, caught in *flagrante delicto*, is sliced in half, this remains entertaining. Scriptwriters Dean Lorey and Jay Huguey mockingly push all the right-off clichés to the limit: "We're going to Camp Crystal Lake," announce the idiot teenagers, "to smoke dope, have premarital sex, and get slaughtered." References to classic horrors abound – the orally-transferred parasite from *Shivers* and *The Hidden*; the evil house from *The Amityville Horror*; even the hand-out-of-the-ground shocker from *Carrie*. Marcus directs with atmospheric visual flair and, with the exception of one risible rubber monster sequence, the special effects are aptly disgusting and inventive. The final shot sets up the possibility of a 'Jason vs. Freddy' showdown, but with Wes Craven currently working on *A Nightmare on Elm Street VII*, this seems unlikely.

● Rental; Guild G8730; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Sean S. Cunningham; Screenplay Dean Lorey, Jay Huguey, Adam Marcus; Lead Actors John D. LeMay, Kari Keegan, Erin Gray, Allison Smith



Faceless nightmare

Voyage

Director John Mackenzie/Italy/UK/Malta 1993

An enjoyable gripping thriller which retreads well-worn ground in an efficient and engaging manner. Struggling couple Morgan and Kit Norvell (Rutger Hauer, Karen Allen) chance on old schoolfriend Gil Freeland (Eric Roberts) and his exotic partner Ronnie (Connie Nielsen). On a marriage-saving cruise in the Mediterranean, the Norvells find themselves lumbered with the Freelands who invite themselves on board and proceed to further disrupt their fragile relationship. As the Freelands' drunken, lecherous behaviour worsens, their twisted intentions are revealed. Although it is clear from the outset that Gil is a maniac who will attempt to destroy his hosts, Mackenzie maintains the suspense throughout, injecting zest and panache into a formulaic story. Karen Allen and Eric Roberts are excellent, lending, respectively, an air of genuine domestic weariness and fantastical psycho-craziness to the proceedings. Rutger Hauer is the weak link in the movie, slurring his words and cruising on autopilot. An example of top quality rental premiere fare.

● Rental; EV EVV 1263; Certificate 15; 86 minutes; Producers Tarak Ben Ammar, Peby Guisez, John Davies; Screenplay Mark Montgomery, Khris Baxter; Lead Actors Eric Roberts, Rutger Hauer, Karen Allen, Connie Nielsen

Bloodstream

Director Stephen Tolkin/USA 1993

Adapted from the stage play *Beirut* by Alan Bowne, this HBO production is packaged as a futuristic action pic but is in fact an intelligent, fantasy about the criminalisation of Aids. In the near future, citizens are encouraged by the government to be tested for a fatal (unnamed) disease passed through blood and sexual contact. Television advertisements show sufferers recuperating in pleasant surroundings, but in reality those who test positive are branded and imprisoned in internment camps. When feisty waif Blue (Moirá Kelly) meets and falls for resistance leader Torch (Cuba Gooding Jnr) she joins the struggle to rescue the patients. With excellent scripting and direction by Tolkin, *Bloodstream* maintains a delicate balance between fantasy and reality, enveloping its political message in an easy-to-swallow dramatic capsule. Kelly is terrific, pitching her emotional responses with restrained precision, particularly in later scenes with Gooding in which she attempts to come to terms with the 'disease'. The futuristic backdrop is chillingly credible – desolate, filthy, and overrun by political propaganda and armed security forces. This film is a real find, but it's a shame about the video packaging.

● Rental; Columbia TriStar CVT 21592; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer John Bard Manulis; Screenplay Stephen Tolkin; Lead Actors Cuba Gooding Jnr, Moira Kelly, Omar Epps, Alice Drummond, David Eigenberg

Shadows

Director John Cassavetes/USA 1959

By allowing his actors to improvise without a script, Cassavetes creates a free-flowing style which perfectly matches the drifting beatniks who are at the heart of the film. What plot there is involves two brothers and a sister, each of whom is black, although the sister and one brother don't look it. For the sister this creates problems when her lover discovers her true racial background. The two brothers drift through New York – one frequenting coffee bars, while the other tries to make it as a singer in dive bars. The details of the time are a pure delight – one character baulks at going to a literary party (where they talk loudly about Jean-Paul Sartre) because "They don't wear ties". The director can be glimpsed as a bystander waving away a potential mugger as if trying to keep his free-form narrative on the move.

(MFB No. 323)

● Retail; Electric Video EP 0044; Price £15.99; B/W; Certificate PG



Freestyle: Leila Goldoni

Mad Dog and Glory

Director John McNaughton/USA 1992

Although John McNaughton is renowned for his intelligently horrific debut *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, *Mad Dog and Glory* is his fourth film, and follows two little-seen, grim comic projects – *The Borrower*, a sci-fi splatter-farce, and the Eric Bogosian concert movie *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*. Here, under producer Martin Scorsese, McNaughton comes of age with an off-beat drama which draws together his taste for acerbic black humour and talent for depicting human breaking points. Soft-spoken police technician Wayne 'Mad Dog' Dobie (Robert De Niro) accidentally saves the life of mobster Frank Milo (Bill Murray), and as a reward

Milo (a maniac with ambitions as a stand-up comedian) 'lends' Wayne his moll Glory (Uma Thurman). Wayne falls for her and vows to win her freedom from Milo. Casting against type, John McNaughton places comic Bill Murray in the unfunny role while former tough guy Robert De Niro gets to be the worm that turns. Both actors perform physical miracles, with Murray pulling himself up to gigantic stature while De Niro seems to shrink on screen. The set-pieces are alternately funny, touching, passionate and desperate, and despite politically correct gripes, the film does not endorse the view that woman are just property to be passed between men.

(S&S July 1993)

● Rental; CIC VHA 1638; Certificate 15



Partners in crime: Bill Murray, Robert De Niro



Love on the rails: 'Closely Observed Trains'

Closely Observed Trains (Ostre Sledované Vlaky)

Director Jiri Menzel/Czechoslovakia 1966

If this seminal Czechoslovakian New Wave comedy was subjected to the mandatory remake (à la *Nikita*) it would no doubt be turned by Hollywood into an upbeat rites-of-passage comedy. The film is about a hapless railway guard called Milos who tries losing his virginity with little of his workmate's success. But what makes it so engaging is the detail of character and incident (it's almost entirely set in a remote Czech railway station) and the way harsh reality is allowed to invade and wipe the smiles off our faces. After a brisk Pythonesque

introduction to Milos' family background, where we learn about his hypnotist uncle who tried to put a spell on a German tank entering Prague (the tank stopped, then promptly ran him over), we are drawn into the film's slow charm. The train guards flirt the time away, sending the station master insane with their conquests on his prize Austrian couch – until an order comes through to sabotage a Nazi munitions train. *Closely Observed Trains* was banned under the Communist regime for being pornographic; we can only wonder what would have happened to the Czech film industry if the Soviets hadn't invaded the country. (MFB No. 413)

● Retail; Connoisseur Video CR 139; Price £15.99; B/W Subtitles; Certificate 15

The Assassin

Director John Badham/USA 1993

Among the slew of US Euro-remakes last year, this revamp of Luc Besson's terrifically trashy French thriller *Nikita* stands out by being uncharacteristically true to its source. Even the camera angles mimic the original as, in the opening, for example, where a low-slung camera prowls round the feet of a junkie being dragged to a drug-store showdown. Badham treats Besson's tale of a young hoodlum turned government killer as a sacred text, replacing the French leads with American actors (Bridget Fonda is passable in the Anne Parillaud role and even the potentially ludicrous substitution of Anne Bancroft for Jeanne Moreau as the wily femininity-instructor passes without incident) and subtly changing the overall hues from moody blues to burning reds. Only the clumsy addition of unnecessary speeches about the heroine's background drag the piece down – that, and the loss of the melancholic air which Besson created. Overall, a serviceable remake for people who don't like subtitles. (S&S July 1993)

● Rental; Warner V012819; Certificate 18



L'Américaine: Bridget Fonda




Deeply cool: Chet Baker

Let's Get Lost

Director Bruce Weber/USA 1988

Bruce Weber went on the road with jazz musician Chet Baker for what turned out to be the last year of his life (Baker died falling out of a hotel window on Friday the 13th). The film follows an often drugged-out Baker (he was a heroin addict for many years) through his last recording sessions and self-centred encounters with fans, friends and family. Interweaved with the striking black-and-white images are shots from old Italian 'B' movies starring a younger handsome Chet, as well as rare performance footage. The originator of West Coast 'cool jazz' may have gone from James Dean's looks to W.H. Auden's in no time, but this stylish documentary gives plenty of opportunity to get lost again in the plaintive tones of his horn-playing and crooning. (MFB No. 673)

● Retail; Mainline MPV 005; Price £15.99; B/W; Certificate 15

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term ‘Premiere’ refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video.  denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Assassin of the Tsar

Director: Karen Shakhnazarov; Russia/UK 1991; Hi Fliers HFV 8256; Certificate 15
An ambitious, oddball psychological thriller-cum-historical drama, shot originally in Russian and dubbed for international release. Psychiatric patient Timofeev (an impressive Malcolm McDowell) is obsessed (or perhaps possessed) by Yankel Yurovsky – the assassin of Tsar Nicholas II. In an attempt to cure his patient Dr. Smirnov (Oleg Yankovsky) adopts the persona of Nicholas II and relives the Tsar’s final days. (S&S December 1993)


Born Yesterday

Director Luis Mandoki; USA 1993; Hollywood Pictures D917442; Certificate PG
An ill-considered remake of George Cukor’s 1950 adaptation of Garson Kanin’s stage hit. While Cukor had Judy Holliday as the bimbo who turns out to be both brainy and beautiful, Mandoki has Melanie Griffith who unfortunately is neither. John Goodman steps ably into the Broderick Crawford role and provides the interest in an otherwise pointless project. (S&S August 1993)

Hot Shots! Part Deux

Director Jim Abrahams; USA 1993; FoxVideo 8507; Certificate PG
Bearable screen junk-food from the burgeoning post-Airplane movie parody genre. Charlie Sheen leads a mission to get “the boys who went in to get the boys” from the Gulf. Sheen is stiff and works too hard at the throwaway gags while Lloyd Bridges is better as incompetent president Tug Benson. There is one great gag – a map showing where the US hostages are held reveals their situation to be between two areas marked ‘Iraq’ and ‘A Hard Place’. (S&S September 1993)

Passenger 57


Director Kevin Hooks; USA 1993; Warner V012569; Certificate 15
An efficient action-vehicle, nimbly directed by Kevin Hooks. Psychopath Charles Rane (Bruce Payne) hijacks a plane without counting on the presence of anti-terrorist expert John Cutter (Wesley Snipes), the passenger of the title. Stand-offs and shoot-outs follow. (S&S June 1993) 

The Vanishing

Director George Sluizer; USA 1993; FoxVideo 1997; Certificate 15
An appalling remake in which Dutch director Sluizer goes belly-up for the Hollywood dollar and massacres his immaculate 1988 thriller, *Spoorloos*. Jeff Bridges hams it up as the raving crazy who kidnaps Kiefer Sutherland’s girlfriend for unspeakable ends. The original chilling ending is replaced by a mindless ‘up-beat’ action scene in which



Altered states: ‘The Cabinet of Dr Caligari’

the main characters hit each other over the head with shovels. (S&S June 1993) 

Rental Premiere

A Case for Murder

Director Duncan Gibbins; USA 1993; CIC VHA 1679; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer Michael S. Murphey; Screenplay Pablo F. Fenives; Lead Actors Jennifer Grey, Peter Berg
Universal Pictures made-for-cable TV-thriller. Young lawyer Kate Weldon (Grey) is taken on as an assistant to defence attorney Jack Hammett (Berg) who is currently investigating a murder case, and discovers that her boss is linked to the murder.

Caught in the Act

Director Deborah Reinisch; USA 1993; CIC VHA 1657; Certificate PG; 89 minutes; Producer Michael Meltzer; Screenplay Ken Hixon, Andy Avason; Lead Actors Gregory Harrison, Leslie Hope
More by-numbers thriller fodder from Universal’s made-for-cable catalogue. Out of work actor Scott McNally (Harrison) finds millions appearing in his bank account, becomes a suspect in a murder investigation and attracts the attentions of a beautiful woman.



Wesley Snipes as ‘Passenger 57’

Day of Atonement

Director Alexandre Arcady; France/Italy 1993; Guild G8729; Certificate 18; 105 minutes; Producer Philippe Guez; Screenplay Alexandre Arcady, Daniel Saint-Harmont, Marc Angelo; Lead Actors Roger Hanin, Richard Berry, Gérard Darmon, Christopher Walken, Jill Clayburgh
A dismal Euro-thriller, woodenly constructed and bearing all the hallmarks of post-production tampering. Mob boss Raymond Bettoun (Roger Hanin) is released from jail with a clean slate, but outside his son has become involved with drug baron Pasco Meisner (Walken). Arcady’s sub-Peckinpah shoot-outs are painfully clumsy and only Walken’s performance is unembarrassing – however, despite star billing, Walken is on screen for less than 14 minutes.

Illegal Entry

Director Henri Charr; USA 1992; Imperial Entertainment IMP 135; Certificate 18; 85 minutes; Producer Jess Mancilla; Screenplay John B. Pfeiffer; Lead Actors Barbara Lee Alexander, Gregory Vignolle, Arthur Roberts, Carol Hoyt
“Why is somebody trying to kill me?”, whines air-head Barbara Lee Alexander. “Because you’re absolutely awful,” should be the reply. Even among the poor performances, lumpen dialogue and silly plot developments, Alexander outdoes everybody by her dreadfulness. The plot: a young prude’s parents are murdered; the reason: a secret scientific formula; the end result: makes *Day of Atonement* (see above) look good.

The Last Mafia Marriage

Director John Patterson; USA 1993; FoxVideo 5941; Certificate 15; 156 minutes; Producer Lynn Raynor; Screenplay Christopher Canaan; Lead Actors Eric Roberts, Nancy McKeon, Ben Gazzara
Lengthy true-life TV movie, benefitting from Eric Roberts’ stalwart lead performance. Opening in the 50s, two mafia gangs are united by the wedding of Rosalie Profaci (McKeon) and Bill Bonanno (Roberts). Over the following decades the marriage is strained by the demands of Bill’s gangland heritage.

LovePotion No. 9

Director Dale Launer; USA 1992; First Independent VA 20206; Certificate 15; 93 minutes; Producer/Screenplay Dale Launer; Lead Actors Tate Donovan, Sandra Bullock, Dale Midkiff
Amiable, frisky comedy fodder, pleasantly reworking the usual teen-genre clichés. Geeky biochemists Paul (Tate Donovan) and Diane (Sandra Bullock) discover a magic chemical voice-spray which makes the user irresistible to the opposite sex. Sandra Bullock’s transformation from hopeless bespectacled frump to curvy glamour puss is particularly impressive, and the scene in which Tate Donovan shuns a beautiful babe who previously rejected him is spitefully funny.

Martial Outlaw

Director Kurt Anderson; USA 1993; First Independent VA 20204; Certificate 18; 86 minutes; Producers Noel Zanitsch, Robert Lansing Parker; Screenplay Thomas Ritz; Lead Actors Jeff Wincott, Gary Hudson, Vladimir Skomarovsky, Richard Jaeckel
An entertaining martial arts romp which is easily Wincott’s finest. Two brothers lock horns while working on an operation to bust a Russian drugs ring. Scanner Cop co-star Gary Hudson is great as Wincott’s evil, double-crossing other half (“I didn’t blow his cover, I shot him.”) who comes through in the final moments. Director Anderson excels in the fight sequences with slapstick-style body blows, often showing the same punch from four different angles. Highlights include a fight in the Russian Club Mockba and Wincott dispatching ten opponents in a spontaneous gladiatorial battle.

Rage: King of Fire II

Director Richard W. Munchkin; USA 1992; Imperial Entertainment IMP 136; Certificate 18; 92 minutes; Producers Joseph Merhi, Richard Pepin; Screenplay Robert Easter; Lead Actors Don “The Dragon” Wilson, Maria Thomas, Sy Richardson, Michael DeLano
In the opening moments of this film, four men with shotguns rob a jewellery store but fail to kill martial-arts expert Johnny Woo (Wilson), who then removes a bullet from his girlfriend! “What are you, a doctor?”, sneers a baddie in disbelief, “Yup,” is Wilson’s unbelievable reply. Inventive fight sequences and an enjoyably daft plot makes this palatable punch-up fare.

Remote Control

Director Ted Nicolaou; USA 1993; CIC VHB 2806; Certificate U; 77 minutes; Producer Charles Band; Screenplay Mike Farrow; Lead Actors Chris Carrar, Jessica Bowman, John Diel, Derya Ruggles, Stuart Fratkin
More disposable, derivative family fun from the Charles Band stable. A 13-year-old kid uses a high-tech remote control unit to foil a group of villains with dastardly plans.

12:01

Director Jack Sholder; USA 1993; Guild G8727; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producers Robert J. Degus, Cindy Hornickel; Screenplay Philip Morton, Jonathan Heap; Lead Actors Helen Slater, Jonathan Silverman, Nicolas Surovy, Jeremy Piven, Martin Landau
Based on a short story by Richard Lupof, this shameless *Groundhog Day* steal is an embarrassment. Barry Thomas has a rotten day working in a high-tech

Jenny Diski relives the dreams of the Czech New Wave

Nouvelle Prague

Sadly, I'm not blessed with the gift of prophecy; a quality whose absence is proven by the wish I always wished as I emerged from the Everyman, NFT or Academy cinemas week by week during the mid-60s. The dream, totally fanciful, and spoken *sotto voce* though without hope to the wish fairy, was that I would actually own 8½, *Seven Samurai* and *Citizen Kane*. Imagine waking up in the morning and knowing you could choose to watch any of those movies whenever you liked.

Sometimes these days, as I slip one or other of those films into the video machine, I wonder if I didn't cause the invention of the VCR, just from wishing so hard. Either that, or I'm imagining the whole technology, and those old films are rolling on the back projector of my mind's eye. Whatever else you might say about the future now that it's here, that part of it lives up entirely to the dream.

Not that, at the time, there was exactly a dream of the future. The other proof that the gift of prophecy failed to fall into my christening crib was that I, along with most of the rest of my generation, never really believed that the future existed, at least in the sense that I would never be around to see it, even if the remnants of a world survived the nuclear holocaust. Wrong again, because here I am, and here we are (most of us), old enough to be running the world and burdening the next generation or two with our obsession – in television and films, in music, books and magazines – with the glories of the long lost 60s.

Anyone under the age of 40 is weighed down with the sense of having missed something vital, and even if they get Otis Redding on advertisements, there's always the feeling that we were there and they weren't. I, on the other hand, am weighed down from time to time with the thought that memory is treacherous, and though the music was great, I watched *The Red Desert* recently and squirmed with shame at the thought that I went to see it three times when it came out. No finer example of tedious pretension was to hit the screen until Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* made me realise that my life would be three (or was it four) hours shorter for having sat through it (though the scene where a young woman walks across a blasted landscape for ten minutes gave birth to the Diski School of Movie Criticism, which holds that no film is good if you can't see where the main female character could buy her Tampax).

Praise then, to Connoisseur Video, for three-quarters cheering me up, at least about some of the films I thought meant so much in the 60s. Their four recent releases from the Czech New Wave – *A Blonde in Love*, *The Shop on the High Street*, *Closely Observed Trains* and *Daisies*, all shown during 1965 and 1966 – have, in retrospect, a terrible poignancy, coming into existence during the brief time when the weighted lids of war, fascism and communism had lifted enough to allow individuals to make their private visions real. Two years later, the Soviet



Making private visions real: Hana Brejchová 'A Blonde in Love'

tanks rolled in to screw the lid firmly back in place again, and three of the four films were banned.

Daisies excepted, what the films have in common is a political knowingness born out of history and experience and an insistence on keeping the flawed and funny individual soul in sharp focus. Against the backdrop of grey bureaucracy and mounting totalitarianism of right or left, people are celebrated for retaining their humanity. But they are not sentimentalised; the humanity they retain includes all the stupidity, viciousness, cowardice and greed that are among our own special qualities, as well as the other stuff – the dreams, courage and compassion.

Everything goes on going on; teenage girls misconstrue one-night stands and dive recklessly into love like ducklings taking to water; young men despair over the mystery of sex yet, without fuss, risk everything to make a gesture against the forces of darkness; opportunist peasants given sovereignty over their Jewish neighbours take what's on offer from the master race, yet boil over with incoherent shame at what they find they have participated in. The only dogma offered by Milos Forman, Ján Kádár and Elmar Klos and Jirí Menzel is that there are no absolutes and that we all quiver between goodness and folly like violins, depending on who is playing us.

What the films also have is a stunning ability to tread the line between humour

and sorrow. They all know that life is tragic, and that the personal tragedy is no less important than the historical tragedy in the flow of history. But we are also hugely funny at the centre of the tragedy – at our best, we die laughing at ourselves. The visual similarity between these New Wave Czech movies and the old silent films is not coincidental, nor is the fact that Jozef Króner's helpless 'Aryan controller' in *The Shop on the High Street* is uncannily reminiscent of Buster Keaton. It's the pathos at the eye of the storm which connects them.

Daisies, I have to say, left me cold, and reminded me of the other side of those days. Radically chic, pointlessly experimental, its characters deliberate ciphers, it reeks of self-regarding despair. No reason for it not to have been made – the point of experiment is that it might not work – but director Vera Chytilová's comment that "We would free ourselves of all implications of the story and keep only the dialogue," is telling. The implication of any story is the human being at the heart of the system. In the three other films the human being is in some way distinct from the circumstances; in *Daisies* the two are merged in an overblown existential orgy. Lose the distinction and you lose everything. Perhaps the truth about the 60s is that it declined into formalism and left the way open for systems and those who love them to run riot, all the way into the desolate 80s.

company in which the woman he desires is shot dead. At 12:01 he is struck by lightning and is forced to relive the same day – only able to escape if he can get the woman to reciprocate his love (stop me if you've heard this before). Even the video sleeve is a mock-up of the *Groundhog Day* cover – just with different faces.

With Hostile Intent

Director Paul Schneider; USA 1992; FoxVideo 5902; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer Vanessa Greene; Screenplay Marjorie David, Alison Cross; Lead Actors Melissa Gilbert, Mel Harris, Peter Onorati, Cotter Smith

A made-for-TV drama from the Fox/CBS *True Stories* series. Two Long Beach cops suffer sexual discrimination and harassment at the hands of their male superiors. Forced to take stress leave, the couple unite to sue the city.

Retail

Being at Home with Claude

Director Jean Beaudin; Canada 1992; Out On a Limb DTK 012; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Impressive adaptation of René-Daniel Dubois' 1985 play about a Montreal male prostitute who savagely murders his lover and then takes cover in a judge's office where his motives are revealed after relentless interrogation. The acting is very good and the direction (especially a suitably nasty pre-credit sequence) is fine, but the play's action doesn't open out quite enough to overcome the claustrophobic feeling of the piece. (S&S June 1993)

A Blonde in Love (Lásky Jedné Plavovlásky)

Director Milos Forman; Czechoslovakia 1965; Connoisseur Video CR 138; Price £15.99; Subtitles B/W; Certificate 15

Forman's second feature is a comedy of manners, showing young lovers in conflict with their elders. Andula (Hana Brejchová) is a shy young factory worker who falls in love with, and seeks out in Prague, a pianist she has had a one night stand with – much to the shock of the man and his parents. A witty critique of Czechoslovakian politics and bureaucracy. (MFB No. 389)

The Blood of a Poet (Le Sang d'un poète)

Director Jean Cocteau; France 1930; Tartan Video TVT 119; Price £15.99; Subtitles B/W; Certificate PG

Cocteau's influential and highly personal first feature involves a poet passing through a mirror into a dream world where he experiences living statues, a dead revolutionary brought back to life and opium smoking. (MFB No. 520)

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari (Das Kabinett des Dr Caligari)

Director Robert Wiene; Germany 1919; Redemption RETN 013; Price £12.99; 68 minutes; Silent B/W; Certificate U

English language-titled version of the influential Expressionist horror in which a fake doctor instructs a somnambulist to become a murderer. A clean print, although not the version shown in 1985 which had colour tints and German intertitles. (MFB No. 135)

Class Act

Director Randall Miller; USA 1992; Warner S01253; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video February 1993)

Daisies (Sedmikrásy)

Director Vera Chytilová; Czechoslovakia 1966; Connoisseur Video CR 140; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Described by its director as “a philosophical documentary in the form of a farce”, this bizarre, challenging and experimental tale of two women who embark on a destructive course through the world is perhaps most notable for the way in which it shows avant-garde film-making breaking into mainstream comedy. Also of note are the film’s many pop art references, especially the daring mix of black-and-white and colour images. (MFB No. 419)

Daughters of the Dust

Director Julie Dash; USA 1991; Connoisseur Video CR 134; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG
This turn-of-the-century period drama follows an African-American Gullah family (who are descendants of slaves living on the islands off the South Carolina coast) prior to their migration to the mainland. Particularly interesting is Dash’s choice of non-linear narration to mirror the West African oral tradition of the griot story-teller. (S&S September 1993)

The Decline of the American Empire (Le Déclin de l’empire américain)

Director Denys Arcand; Canada 1986; Artificial Eye ART 084; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
The battle of the sexes is the subject of Arcand’s well-regarded satire in which four men and women, whose secrets are revealed at the beginning of the film, meet for an edgy dinner party in which the knives really do come out. (MFB No. 632)

Deep Red (Profundo rosso)

Director Dario Argento; Italy 1975; Redemption RETN 015; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
A preposterous plot links a variety of glorious ghoulish set-pieces in true Argento fashion. David Hemmings plays a jazz pianist who witnesses a murder and becomes involved in tracking a serial killer. Homages to Hitchcock and Antonioni abound, but Argento is in his element in the build-up and execution of the horrific murders, driven by a vibrating electronic score. (MFB No. 610)

The Eagle

Director Clarence Brown; USA 1925; Golden Age Films VRL 0054; Price £12.99; Silent B/W; Certificate U
Rudolph Valentino plays a Russian Robin Hood who turns outlaw after his father’s lands are annexed. (MFB No. 508)

Faces

Director John Cassavetes; USA 1968; Electric Video EP 0043; Price £15.99; B/W; Certificate 15
An original and searing look at middle age, set during two days in the life of an unhappily married couple Richard and Maria Forst (John Marley, Lynn Carlin). Cassavetes’ achievement reminds us how insubstantial and shallow the current American independent film scene is today. (MFB No. 419)



Memories: ‘Daughters of the Dust’

The Favour, the Watch and the Very Big Fish (Rue Saint-Sulpice)

Director Ben Lewin; France/UK 1991; Columbia TriStar CVR 22973; Price £8.99; Certificate 15 (S&S February 1992)

A Few Good Men

Director Rob Reiner; USA 1992; Columbia TriStar CVR 24593; Price £13.99; Also available in widescreen; Certificate 15 (S&S January 1993)

La Fille de l’air

Director Maroun Bagdadi; France 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1137; Price £15.99; Subtitles Widescreen; Certificate 15
As in his last film *Hors la vie* where Bagdadi elicited sympathy for both captive and captors alike, here he shows the police and criminals to be mirror images of each other. Based on fact, as with the earlier film, this is a highly watchable story of a woman who learns to fly a helicopter to try and free her husband from jail. (S&S November 1993)

Le Frisson des vampires

Director Jean Rollin; France 1970; Redemption RETN 018; Price £12.99; Certificate 18
Limp vampire fairytale from Rollin, which seems to be set in the same castle that was used in *Requiem for a Vampire*, and which exposes copious amounts of flesh. The filming is unimaginative except for one death by an ‘iron maiden’ wearing a Jean-Paul Gaultier-style spiked bra. (MFB No. 454)



Manhattan ennui: Carolyn Farina ‘Metropolitan’

Graveyard Shift

Director Ralph S. Singleton; USA 1990; Columbia TriStar CVR 22854; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S June 1991)

Hair

Director Milos Forman; USA 1979; MGM/UA S051330; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
Cringe-making musical about a Vietnam draftee (John Savage) who falls for beautiful deb Beverly D’Angelo. Hippie leader Treat Williams tries to bring them together to save Savage from an uncertain fate overseas. (MFB No. 546)

House of Angels (Anglagård)

Director Colin Nutley; Sweden 1993; Curzon CV 0031; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
British director Nutley’s third Swedish film concentrates on an outsider overcoming local bigotry when she turns up unexpectedly to claim a farm left to her in the will of an eccentric widower. An unremarkable comedy which has an Oedipal quest as its main narrative thrust. (S&S July 1993)

Intolerance

Director D.W. Griffith; USA 1916; Golden Age Films VRL 0050; Price £12.99; Silent B/W; Certificate PG
Griffith’s first production after *The Birth of a Nation* features battle scenes galore and sumptuous feasts which must have required stupendous feats of engineering. Four tales from varying historical periods are linked by a theme of intolerance through the ages. There is a 182-minute print of *Intolerance* available, but this version runs for just 115 minutes. (MFB No. 544)

Longtime Companion

Director Norman Rene; USA 1990; DV8 1; Price £14.99; Certificate 15
Superbly-acted drama resembling a simple soap opera, about a number of gay relationships and how the men cope with the threat of Aids. (MFB No. 682)

The Lost World

Director Harry O. Hoyt; USA 1925; Golden Age Films VRL 0051; Price £12.99; Silent B/W; Certificate U
Early monster movie based on the Arthur Conan Doyle novel about a plateau where prehistoric creatures still roam. (MFB No. 509)

Metropolitan

Director Whit Stillman; USA 1990; Mainline Pictures MPV 006; Price £15.99; Certificate 15
The obnoxious world of New York’s urban haute bourgeoisie is captured in all its pomposity by Stillman’s charming first feature. An outsider is dragged into the rarefied social set in Manhattan, and while pursuing his flighty ex-girlfriend catches the eye of the Jane Austen-obsessed Audrey. The script is a joy. (MFB No. 683)

Night on Earth

Director Jim Jarmusch; USA 1992; Electric Video EP 0036; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 (S&S August 1992)

The Night of the Generals

Director Anatole Litvak; UK 1966; Columbia TriStar CVR 30199; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
A top-ranking German general is suspected when a prostitute is murdered in this star-studded war drama. Peter O’Toole clearly relished the OTT scenes in front of a Van Gogh self-portrait. (MFB No. 398)

The Old Woman Who Walked into the Sea (La Vieille qui marchait dans la mer)

Director Laurent Heynemann; France 1991; Tartan Video TVT 1099; Subtitles Widescreen; Price £15.99; Certificate 18
Jeanne Moreau is magnificent as Lady M, an eccentric elderly conwoman, although her stellar presence unbalances what is basically a flimsy comic caper. Lady M, Pompilius (Michel Serrault) and a young beach bum Lambert (Luc Thuillier) form a bizarre *ménage à trois* who delight in fleecing the rich and famous on the Riviera and in Paris. (S&S July 1993)

The Prince of Pennsylvania

Director Ron Nyswaner; USA 1988; Missing in Action V3374; Price £10.99; Certificate 15
Welcome release of this quirky comedy in which a misunderstood child (Keanu Reeves) kidnaps coalminer dad (Fred Ward) with the help of 60s-casualty girlfriend (Amy Madigan), only to discover that nobody wants to pay the ransom money. (MFB No. 661)

Queen Kelly

Director Erich von Stroheim; USA 1931; Golden Age Films VRL 0053; Price £12.99; Silent B/W; Certificate PG
In this 115-minute version of the film, Gloria Swanson plays a rebellious schoolgirl, kidnapped from a convent and introduced to the pleasures of life by a debauched prince. A folly which was funded by JFK’s father Joe and halted as costs escalated out of control, *Queen Kelly* is a film which Swanson managed to keep the lid on for almost sixty years (it was memorably glimpsed in *Sunset Boulevard*). Von Stroheim originally intended it as a five-hour epic. First shown in the States in 1929, this is the 1931 European version which does not end in a sequence of stills. (MFB No. 620)

Rapid Fire

Director Dwight Little; USA 1992; FoxVideo 1978; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S November 1992) ☐

The Scarecrow

Director Sam Pillsbury; New Zealand 1982; Art House AHP 5007; Price £15.99; Certificate 15
Magician and hypnotist Hubert Salter (John Carradine) arrives in a small New Zealand town at the same time as a

WIND UP

By Peter Dean

● True to form, the Hollywood majors dominated the UK video scene in 1993, with Emile Ardolino's comedy *Sister Act* the most popular rental title. The rest of the top ten were (in order): *The Bodyguard*, *Universal Soldier*, *Under Siege*, *Lethal Weapon 3*, *Single White Female*, *Home Alone 2*, *Patriot Games*, *A Few Good Men* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. The industry's publicity-conscious governing bodies will no doubt be pleased to see that there were only two 18-certificated films among the ten. The highest placed non-US film was *The Crying Game* at 21; *Peter's Friends* came in at 38; *Howards End* at 58. Disney dominated the video retail charts, with *The Jungle Book* the largest-selling video outside of North America. 14 million copies were shipped to Europe for a rough net revenue of £210 million. In the UK five million copies have been sold,



Whoopi Goldberg 'Sister Act'

making it likely that by the time the title is withdrawn by Disney and returned to the vaults, roughly one in three British homes will own a copy. Disney's characters don't feature, however, in one of the most popular children's animated videos. Titled *My Best Friends*, it features numerous well-known children's characters from most of the major kids' vids players. Companies waived fees in order to raise £370,000 for the National Children's Home, the industry's adopted charity. The reason for Disney's absence? – "It's our policy not to mix characters from other studios," said a Disney spokesperson.

Courtesy of Jacques Toubon, the French Minister of Culture, Jean-Marie Poiré's 'Les Visiteurs' has rather surprisingly appeared in the shops in time for Christmas. Careful to protect their cinema industry, the French normally have a mandatory twelve-month window imposed between cinema and video release. If a film isn't very successful, or if it has disappeared from the box office, then a plea can be made to reduce the year's wait. This is hardly the case with 'Les Visiteurs', one of the most successful French films in living memory, with over twelve million admissions and over FF160 million taken at the box office. Come week 40, the film is still taking over a million francs through 35 prints – and yet it is now out on retail video. At the same time, Warner Home Video's request to move 'The Bodyguard' to video has been rejected, even though the film is taking no money at the box office. No doubt the incensed US major think the rejection by the French has something to do with the GATT talks.

● Video rental is generally on the wane in Europe while video retail is on the up. Only two countries show a rise in the video rentals last year – Spain and the UK. Whether the rise in rentals in Britain to 320 million is a blip due to factors

over the summer (bad weather, popular blockbusters, and TV advertising) remains to be seen. The UK video industry is certainly Europe's largest, with a revenue for rental and retail of £1.15 billion.

Don't goto the International Video Federation for 1993 figures. It hasn't compiled complete 1992 statistics yet – and the ones it does have are in Belgian francs.

● Good news for the film collector – specialist video labels are springing up all over the place. Redemption Video is already a year old, having cornered the fetishistic horror market. Aktiv Video is lining up another slate of Spagehetti Westerns, while most recently there has been the birth of silent film specialists Golden Age Films, a new gay label DV8, and most impressively, Art House Films, which will this year release 45 films including classics such as *Bicycle Thieves* and *La Grande illusion*, as well as a cherry-picked selection from around the world, particularly from the Antipodes. The mini mogul behind the label, Richard Larcombe, admits he used the name Art House with tongue slightly in cheek, as the majority of his films are either English-language or films with a cult following. A cheeky approach was certainly taken with the launch party: invitations were printed on sick bags. A screening of the tasteless Marco Ferreri film *La Grande bouffe*, in which four middle-aged men eat and drink themselves to death, was followed by similar proceedings at Soho's revamped Amalfi restaurant where the food kept coming, and coming, and coming. The septuagenarian director was in attendance with salty tales of filming, although it has to be said he didn't eat much. And he didn't see the party invitations.

Setting up your own video label needn't be expensive – with low acquisition prices and a five year licence. If your film sells about 1,000 copies in the first year and another 1,000 in the next four then you're in business. Profits are marginal but if you can increase the titles in the library, hey presto, you've got your own video publishing business.

● When comedians Rob Newman and David Baddiel announced their split prior to their Wembley gig, video label VVL who were filming the event knew they had a blockbuster on their hands. The video was in the shops within a week, having been cleared through the BBFC in double-quick time. What Robin Holloway at Connoisseur Video wants to know is why his art-house films take three months to get through the censor's office. "I know Rob Newman and David Baddiel were obviously regarded as a top priority but to me every one of my releases is a priority."

Lavinia Carey picked the wrong week to become the director of British Videogram Association. Within two days of becoming the official video spokeswoman, a judge linked a video of 'Child's Play 3' with the James Bulger murder. For distributors CIC (Universal and Paramount) it was also heart-in-mouth time. **Pages 6 and 7 of their new 48-page 'Direct From Hollywood' mail order catalogue (to 500,000 homes) had a fully-bled shot of Chucky shearing the head off a jack-in-the-box. CIC has withdrawn the video.**

young girl has been found with her throat cut. As more people start to disappear, a confused adolescent fears his sister could be next. (MFB No. 585)

The Shop on the High Street (Obchod na Korze)

Directors Ján Kádar, Elmar Klos; Czechoslovakia 1966; Connoisseur Video CR 138; Price £15.99; Subtitles B/W; Certificate 15 A grim tale of fascism in occupied Czechoslovakia which is played out as an ironic comedy. A carpenter is appointed as an Aryan 'controller' of a button shop run by a Jewish woman who believes the controller to be her new assistant. Unable to tell her the truth, a mutually-beneficial relationship develops until the authorities step in. (MFB No. 379)

Straight Out of Brooklyn

Director Matty Rich; USA 1991; Artificial Eye ART 068; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 (S&S October 1992)

La Vampire nue

Director Jean Rollin; France 1969; Redemption RETN 020; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 Rollin is at his most effective and fetishistic in this film, creating a world that is genuinely unsettling, with hooded characters watching ritualistic death games set to the sound of discordant strings. Pierre discovers that his father's club houses an orphan with a rare blood condition who feeds off the dead members of a suicide cult. The film is at times without dialogue and the science fiction ending is very bizarre. (MFB No. 473)

Vigil

Director Vincent Ward; New Zealand 1984; Art House AHP 5003; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 Ward made an impression with his debut feature – a dream-like evocation of childhood on a remote New Zealand farm. Lisa is a tomboy whose mother and senile grandfather try to eke out a living after her father dies in a tragic accident. The arrival of the mysterious hunter Ethan brings hope but also increasingly fraught tension into their lives. (MFB No. 614)

Virgin Witch

Director Ray Austin; UK 1970; Redemption RETN 016; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 Voyeurism and sado-masochistic sex abound in this amusingly dated British horror-cum-skin-flick. *Allo! Allo!*'s Vicky Michelle is cast as one of two models who head to the country home of a model agency boss and encounter satanic rituals. The script is so bad it's almost good, especially with one villain named Sybil. (MFB No. 458)

Retail Premiere

Baron Blood

(Gli orrori del castello di Norimberga) Director Mario Bava; Italy 1972; Redemption RETN 019; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 88 minutes; Producers Alfred Leone; Screenplay Vincent Fotre; Lead Actors Elke Sommer, Massimo Girotti, Rada Rassimov, Joseph Cotten

There are plenty of kitsch treats in this above-average 70s horror yarn – from the travelogue-style opening on a jumbo jet accompanied by muzak, to an ageing wheelchair-bound Joseph Cotten

hamming it up as the villain. A man returns to his Austrian home and resurrects his evil uncle Baron Blood. With the help of Elke Sommer he then tries to bury the Baron for good.

Bye Bye Monkey (Ciao Maschio/Ciao Male)

Director Marco Ferreri; Italy/France 1978; Art House AHO 6014; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 110 minutes; Producer unknown; Screenplay unknown; Lead Actors Gérard Depardieu, James Coco, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Marcello Mastroianni

Weird and pretentious nonsense, only of interest for its star-studded cast. Gérard Depardieu, who works at a women's theatre group in New York, discovers King Kong's corpse on the banks of the Hudson and adopts the young chimpanzee he finds cradled in its arms.

Faust

Director F.W. Murnau; Germany 1926; Golden Age Films VRL 52; Price £12.99; B/W Silent; Certificate U; 100 minutes; Producer unknown; Screenplay Hans Kyser; Lead Actors Gösta Ekman, Emil Jannings, Camilla Horn

Murnau's last film to be made in Germany before his unhappy sojourn in Hollywood is a lavish studio production with superb sets constructed by Robert Herlth and Walter Rohrig. Faust (Gösta Ekman), an elderly professor, sells his soul to the devil in exchange for youth. The images, design and camerawork all work to dazzling effect.

L'Homme de ma vie

Director Jean-Charles Tacchella; France 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1096; Price £15.99; Subtitles Widescreen; Certificate 15; Producer Gabriel Boustani; Screenplay Jean-Charles Tacchella; Lead Actors Maria de Medeiros, Thierry Fortineau, Jean-Pierre Bacri, Anne Letourneau

Gentle romantic comedy from the director of *Cousin Cousine*. Misanthropic Aimée (De Medeiros), after collecting data on the available men in her area, settles for a cynical secondhand bookseller. His imminent eviction and bleak outlook disguise the fact that he could be her Mr Goodbar.

The Man from Beyond

Director Burton King; USA 1921; Golden Age Films VRL 0055; Price £12.99; B/W Silent; Certificate PG; 80 minutes; Producer unknown; Screenplay Harry Houdini; Lead Actor Harry Houdini

Houdini wrote and starred in this story about a man encased in a block of ice for a hundred years who is discovered, thawed out and thrust into twentieth-century life. Worth watching, despite its lack of sophistication (especially the special effects), for its place in cinema history as one of the few surviving examples of Houdini's film work.

Mark of the Devil (Brenn, Hexe, Brenn)

Director Michael Armstrong; West Germany 1969; Redemption RETN 021; Price £15.99 Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Adrian Koben; Screenplay Sergio Casstner; Perry Parker; Lead Actors Herbert Lom, Udo Kier, Olivera Vuco

Apparently this was the first film to issue sick bags as a theatrical release gimmick. Lord Cumberland and his dreamy companion try and temper the insane inquisition carried out by a sadistic witchfinder in a Central European village. The film's taste is dubious, the dubbing is worse and it rates high on the sleaze factor scale.

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL
Facsimile 071 436 2327

The Piano revisited

From Richard Cummings

Notwithstanding Stella Bruzzi's brilliant article on Jane Campion's *The Piano* (S&S October), the film is not nearly as original as it pretends to be. In fact, it has its roots in the original Rudolph Valentino version of *The Sheik*, in which another white woman awakens her eroticism with a pseudo-Third World character, in this case an Arab, who turns out to be, to everyone's relief, an Anglo-European, thereby making their sexual union acceptable. In the same vein, the American music industry had to find an Elvis Presley to make black erotic sounds while not being black.

Our heroine in *The Piano*, Ada, gets her kicks from the hunk Baines, superbly portrayed by Harvey Keitel, who has gone native, but is not native. While he is not the boring symbol of oppressive patrimony that her mail-order husband is, he is, as a character, a cop-out. He sleeps with the natives, characterised as a stupid and totally colonised lot (the scene of the two Maori girls singing 'God Save the Queen' is positively sickening, as is the disruption of the school play by the moronic savages), and has Maori facial decorations on his skin, but thank God, in the immortal words of Gilbert and Sullivan, "he remains an Englishman". Worse yet, Ada is saved to get out of the Third World and return to 'civilisation' to teach the piano in a white world and to live in a charming white house.

In a post-colonial world, this is not only condescending, but so Eurocentric as to be totally anachronistic. Once again, a white woman is acting out her fantasies in the jungle with a white hero to her rescue. She decides to live instead of drown because she knows exactly where she is going and with whom. Tarzan and Jane, anyone?

Bridgehampton, New York, USA

Video censors

From P. Hartridge

Are the readers of *Sight and Sound* aware that the Liberal Democrat MP David Alton plans to table an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill in Parliament, which, if it were to become law, would effectively ban the sale or rental of all 18 rated videos and the showing of all 18 rated films (and even restrict the showing of 15 rated films) on television. The 18 rating would be replaced by the classification "not suitable for home viewing". Any film likely to cause "grave offence" to a "reasonable person" would be thus classified. The words "offence" and especially "reasonable" are notoriously difficult to define in legal terms: we all consider ourselves reasonable people and we are all offended by different things, hence the likelihood that 18 rated films will simply be excluded from home viewing.

Since approximately 22 per cent of all films released in the UK in 1992 (the most recent year for which figures are available) were rated 18, and a large proportion of the remainder were 15 rated, this is not creeping censorship, but wholesale and blanket censorship which would have a quite dra-

matic effect on viewer freedom of choice and by extension on the freedom of expression of all film-makers. The economic impact on the video manufacturing, distribution and rental/retail industry can only be guessed at.

To give you some idea of just how crude and indiscriminating this law would be, here is a short list of some of the films currently available to buy or rent on video that are rated 18: *GoodFellas*, *Raging Bull*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Klute*, the *Godfather* films, *Die Hard*, *Repulsion*, *Blue Velvet*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, *Lethal Weapon 1* and *2*, *Easy Rider*, *The Terminator*, *Mona Lisa*, and, among this year's bestsellers, *Single White Female* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

Alton is introducing his amendment because of understandable public outrage about two recent and shocking murders, those of James Bulger and Suzanne Capper. Some believe violent videos are partly responsible for inspiring the killers. But James Ferman, himself no stranger to censorship, has this to say about the Bulger case and the row over *Child's Play 3*: "I've been through the video and I can't find anything in it... that has anything to do with the James Bulger case." And although the murderers of Suzanne Capper played her excerpts from *Child's Play*, they also played her loud rave music. Should we now ban rave music too? Suzanne Capper's murder was prompted by a horrible desire for revenge on the part of the perpetrators, blown up out of all proportion to the incidents that occasioned it.

The proper response to the worries of parents about their children's exposure to unsuitable material is not the imposition of more restrictions (the UK, by the way, is already one of the most heavily censored countries in the western world), but the provision of more information: more publicity about the meaning of the different film certificates, clearer labelling of videos, possibly the introduction of parental warnings, the extension of the video classification system to films shown on television and improvements in the media education children receive at school. All these measures would help to equip viewers young and older to watch intelligently and selectively, and to enable parents to make responsible decisions about the viewing habits of their children.

Anyone who cares about cinema and the defence of civil liberties must oppose this amendment. Write to David Alton and to your MP making the case for freedom of expression and responsible choice. And ask your friends to do the same.

Yate, Bristol

Index

From R. F. Dearden

I have been taking *Sight and Sound* since September 1991 and its arrival is one of the things I look forward to at the end of each month. However, there is one way in which I find your magazine disappointing. Time after time I want to check some point of reference in a past issue, only to be faced by a thickening pile of back issues which makes tracking down the point increasingly tedious and time-consuming.

If producing an index would upset your format, it could be printed as a loose insert,

but however it is done, its omission seems a gaping hole in a serious magazine.

Solihull, West Midlands

Editor's note: As subscribers know, *Sight and Sound* has produced a comprehensive annual index since 1991. Issued free to subscribers, each index can be obtained at £2.50 from the editorial office. The 1993 index is available now.

City Rats

From Roy Bowden

Since you published my letter lamenting the customs officials' seizure of my copy of *City Rats* (S&S December) I have had several letters of support and discovered that *The Toxic Avenger* and *In the Realm of the Senses* have also been seized as "obscene" on their way into the UK from Holland. The latter was eventually released, and in my own case *City Rats* is to be returned to Holland as I can't afford to fight for it in court. I have obtained an English version of *City Rats* cut by just 74 seconds and it turns out to be an excellent film on the plight of kids allowed to run wild on the streets.

The 'Wind Up' column (S&S January) with its item on chain sticks in martial arts films amused me as it shows the BBFC to be totally out of touch with reality. In Holland the Bruce Lee classic movies are uncut and given an AL rating on video – the equivalent of a U or PG here – meaning that children of any age can watch them.

London N3

2001 screening

From Bill Lawrence

I opened the January issue of *Sight and Sound* with some excitement, noting the appearance of Mark Crispin Miller's article on *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Had he seen it at one of the October screenings of the 70mm print on the National Museum of Photography Film & Television's new Cinerama screen in Bradford? No, he'd seen it on tape!

I would agree that *2001* is getting hard to see. We had to go to some lengths to get a 70mm print into Britain for the brief period of a week before it was needed in Australia. The three shows sold out quickly, with many people making the trip from London for a unique event. Not only was the film shown on a large screen, in an auditorium with good cinema acoustics, but back to the curved screen format of Cinerama and with a sound system that is vastly superior to those of the 60s. Arguably the quality of the screenings was better than any the film received on its release.

We receive regular requests to show the film – more than for any other. The recent Channel 4 screening provoked a further wave of requests and the screenings in October by no means satisfied demand. While its impact and the significance of its image of the future may have diminished over 26 years, its mystery and enigma, when seen under the conditions Kubrick intended, still capture the imagination of the cinema-going public.

Frustrated by our attempts to show *2001* regularly, we are trying to find the funds to buy a 70mm print that we can hold and use for regular Cinerama screenings. Are there any willing sponsors out there?

National Museum of Photography,
Film & Television, Bradford



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